Will you always love me?

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Will you always love me?

by lady_slice

Summary

Will and Hannibal have known each other since their late teens. When he was young, Will's family had moved to Lithuania for a few years during his father's tenure in the army. Soon after, the Grahams became close friends with the Lecters and an instant bond was formed between their two sons.

Over the years, Will and Hannibal had become extremely close, almost like brothers, until Will visited Hannibal in New York for a week while the latter was attending medical school. From there, their relationship got…well let's just say, a little complicated.

Hannibal AU, mostly taking place a year ago. Will, who is now 32, is working at Johns Hopkins University, teaching classes in the psychology department. Hannibal, now 37, visits him while attending a medical conference in Baltimore. From there, we learn about their complicated history.

The story is divided up into four volumes, split into parts, exploring specific moments from Will and Hannibal's relationship. These stories are tied together with the weekend from a year ago.

Notes

happy shipping, fellow shipmates

--lady_slice

Vol. One - Part One

Present Day

Will blinked a little as the sun forced its way into the bedroom. The curtains were pulled all the back; the bedroom illuminated by the waning morning sun. He licked his lips and slowly reached over to check the time. It was eleven, late in the morning.

Ugh, I slept in way too late...

Will let his body fall back onto the bed with a soft plop. He heard the shower running.

There's no way Hannibal slept in this late too...

Will pulled the sheets up over his head as he turned over on his side, facing away from the window. He groaned out how groggy he felt. He had gotten more than the usual eight hours of sleep, but his body wanted to sleep in longer. However, he needed to look through his course term papers as early as possible today, or he would end up having to push the grading to the next day, eating into his free time usually reserved for Sundays.

Will heard the shower stop running. He couldn't drag himself out from underneath the duvet cover. The light in the room was making his head swirl and he just wanted to sleep an extra hour or two more…maybe he could let some of the papers wait until tomorrow.

After a minute or two, he felt Hannibal's side of the bed slump downward and a hand caress his side through the sheets. Will groaned again as he turned to face the window, refusing to leave the soft warm comfort offered by the duvet and sheets.

"What happened to you getting up early?" Hannibal asked in a soft playful tone.

Will blinked a few times, yawning before turning around to face Hannibal. "I'll just stay up a bit later…or finish grading half of the papers tomorrow."

Will begrudgingly shifted his whole body to look at Hannibal. Hannibal was sitting on the bed with just a towel wrapped around his waist. A towel he had used to dry his hair was draped around his neck.

Will smiled at the sight of his boyfriend.

It had taken a while for them to finally arrive at this point: together and fully committed. Their past history was a faded memory. Will couldn't remember why it had taken him so long to finally commit to Hannibal.

Hannibal ran a hand through Will's hair, and Will closed his eyes and leaned into the touch. He loved it whenever Hannibal tugged a little at his hair, ending at the nape of his neck and massaging him with his hand.

“Well, you would know best.” Hannibal quipped. He got up from the bed after lingering his gaze at Will.

Will grinned. He knew Hannibal was giving him a hard time about putting off the grading. He chuckled as he turned onto his back, resting his arms behind his head.

He watched Hannibal walk over to his dresser. Hannibal looked over his shoulder back toward Will, aware that he was watching him get dressed. Hannibal pulled the towel off from his waist and let it fall to the floor.

Will moaned faintly as he sat up in the bed, transfixed on the sight of Hannibal’s naked backside. He watched Hannibal reach inside the dresser and pull out a pair of boxers. Hannibal took his time putting his boxers on; he knew Will was still watching him dress.

Will licked his lips and bit his bottom lip as he watched Hannibal slowly put on his boxers. He felt himself getting hard as the anxiety regarding his papers was swept away with the anticipation of sexual gratification.

Hannibal turned around and walked back over toward the bed. Will felt the bed give a little from Hannibal’s added weight as he watched his boyfriend crawl up to lay on top of him. Will groaned as Hannibal cupped his face and leaned in for a kiss.

“Just make sure you’re free tonight.” Hannibal whispered. He tilted forward and kissed Will on the lips. Will accepted the kiss as he used one hand to pull Hannibal closer toward him.

“I guess I could try.” Will answered through the kiss.

About a year ago…

Will walked into his office before switching the light on. It was the beginning of a hectic week and his head pounded with every little item he needed to accomplish before the end of it. He set his bag down on the ledge of a bookshelf before taking a seat at his desk. Will sighed before turning his computer on; he wasn’t ready for the onslaught of emails he had been avoiding all morning.

Will worked in the psychology department at John Hopkins University. He had been there for about a year and enjoyed the position for the most part. He didn’t take the time to become super social with his colleagues in the department, yet he did become close friends with Beverly Katz, a state police officer who taught adjunct classes at the university in her spare time. Most of his social time consisted of either hanging out with Beverly or his new girlfriend, Molly.

Will had met Molly about a month ago. Beverly had dragged him to a social gathering for instructors and lecturers working at the university and he ended up talking to Molly toward

the end of the night. She was nice and easy to talk to, and considering his past relationships, Will appreciated the change in pace. Although they had seen each other every weekend since meeting, Will hadn't made it clear whether they were exclusive.

Part of his hesitance stemmed from thinking about Hannibal on a daily basis.

Will turned on his computer and scrolled through his emails. His inbox was full of messages from students, the department chair, and spam. Will dawdled through to see which ones were the most important to answer (and/or delete) until he reached an email from an address he hadn't seen in almost over year.

There sitting in his inbox was an email from Hannibal, sent earlier this morning. Will felt his hands starting to shake and moisten. He hadn't heard from Hannibal in what seemed like forever. Will took his time clicking on the email.

The subject line read: **"Long time, no see ;)"**.

> "Will – How are you? My apologies for seemingly sending you an email out of the blue. I'm planning to attend a conference in Baltimore next weekend, and I thought, if you were free, we could get dinner?"

Will forgot to breath as he read through the first half of Hannibal's email; his eyes widened with anticipation.

> "I'm sure you're probably hesitant to see me, considering our last conversation, but I do miss you and I would like to see you...if you're amenable to the idea, of course."

Will's heart started to pound in his chest. He leaned forward in his chair.

> "Let me know what works. Hope to hear from you soon. – Hannibal"

Will leaned backward into his seat as he ran a hand through his hair. He acted before thinking clearly about his decision.

He hit the reply button.

> "Hannibal – It's great to hear from you! Of course, I'm free. How long are you planning to stay? If you haven't booked a hotel yet, and if it's not weird…you could stay with me, if you like."

Will didn't think about his response before sending it. Lately, his mind had been consumed with thoughts of Hannibal and the possibility of seeing him again clouded his judgement.

Will waited patiently at his desk for a reply, tapping his fingers on the keyboard. He thought to himself that he was being silly and reminded himself that he had sent Hannibal an email, not a text, so he needed to calm down and get some work done.

However, his computer pinged with a quick response from Hannibal and not a moment later.

> "Well, that would be great, actually. The conference reserved a hotel for the participants, but I much rather stay with you."

Will couldn't help himself; his eagerness overtook his body. He hurriedly typed out a draft response.

> "I don't know your plans, and I know this is a little last minute, but would you be able to stay a little longer? It would be great to catch up with you when you're finished with your conference and the university is on break the following week."

Will's fingers hovered over the keyboard before he sent his reply. He didn't realize how much he had missed Hannibal. He knew he was coming off too eager, though. Hopefully, it wouldn't push his friend away.

He hit send.

Hannibal didn't respond back as quickly as he had done before, so Will took it as a sign that he was busy. He sat back in his chair and breathed heavily. He felt the faint thumping of his heart decrease from its rapid movement from about a minute before.

And of course, Will had completely forgotten that he was seeing Molly when he sent those emails to Hannibal…

Fuck…

Will heard a soft knock on his door. Beverly propped the door open slightly before poking her head in.

"Hey, Will! How's your morning?" Beverly walked in and sat on the ledge of Will's bookshelf. She noticed that her friend seemed anxious. She changed her tone to match his mood.

"Hey? Are you all right?" Beverly crossed her arms and tilted her head downward to look at Will.

Will breathed heavily. He loosened his tie before speaking, taking his time. "I think I just made a huge mistake..."

Beverly furrowed her brow. "What happened?" She made it obvious that she feared whatever Will was about to say next.

Will sighed before burying his face in his hands. “You remember…my…friend Hannibal?”

Beverly hitched her head forward, motioning for Will to get to the point. “Yes. What happened?”

Will sat back in his chair and crossed his arms. “He’s coming to visit Baltimore next weekend…”

Beverly still didn’t see what the big deal was because Will hadn’t told her about his complicated relationship with Hannibal.

Beverly shrugged, clearly puzzled. “Okay, that’s great right? Didn’t you two have some huge falling out before your accident?”

Will got up from his desk and set up a fold out chair for Beverly to sit in. He motioned for her to sit as she confusingly accepted the offer. She stared back at him as he went back to his seat across the desk.

“It’s a long-complicated story…I’m not sure how much time you have…”

Beverly eagerly scooted her chair up to the desk indicating that she was intrigued. “I always have time for long-complicated stories. Spill it.”

Will sighed and fiddled with a pen on his desk. “Hannibal and I…well…I guess you could say, that we’ve…slept together…”

Beverly’s eyes widened as her voice lowered with curiosity. “How many times?”

Will looked up at the ceiling then back down at the pen in his hand as he sighed once more. “A few times…”

Beverly scooted closer. “What’s a few...? Like three times or a lot?”

Will cast his eyes downward. “Closer to a lot…”

Beverly had to control herself from jerking out of her chair. “Will! Does Molly know he’s coming to visit?”

Will huffed nervously, but stayed quiet.

“Will? Does Molly know that Hannibal is coming to visit next weekend?” Beverly was staring him down at this point.

“No…she doesn’t even know…who he is…” Will stammered through.

Beverly controlled herself from shouting, but her eyes widened even more. Will had never seen someone so shocked before.

“Will! Molly doesn’t know about your best friend? The person you grew up with and apparently slept with more than a few times?”

Will meekly nodded his head. He felt the tips of his ears burning from the gravity of the situation he had created.

“What does Hannibal think about your relationship with Molly?” Beverly asked. She didn’t know the full story about his fight with Hannibal from a year ago (of course the fight had been about Will’s girlfriend at the time).

Will sighed again. “I didn’t mentioned Molly in the email…” He almost whispered the statement as if everyone in the world were listening.

Beverly cocked her head forward as if she didn’t hear him, but she did. She couldn’t believe what he was saying.

“Excuse me?”

Will rolled his eyes. “I didn’t mention Molly. The email correspondence was quick and there was no natural way to bring her up.”

Beverly leaned back hard in her chair. “Will, you could have mentioned your girlfriend, especially if you’re talking to someone you used to sleep with.”

“Okay, Beverly, what would be the best way to bring that up?” Will was mimicked typing out an imaginary email on his computer, “yes, Hannibal I would love to see you, but I’m kind of seeing someone, so we can’t fuck around this time.”

Beverly tilted her head to the side. She sighed as she slowly blinked. “Will, relax. I’m just trying to tell you to be honest. It sounds like you really haven’t been…”

Will knew she was right. Beverly was great about being straightforward with him even though it was annoying once in a while. He knew he would need to lean on her during this mess.

“Will, all you need to do is talk to them both. Also, if you feel tempted you should be honest and break it off with Molly or only see Hannibal once or twice this weekend, if you really want to be with her…”

Will dramatically sucked in a breath before speaking again. “…the last part might not be possible. I sort of…I…told Hannibal he could stay with me the entire weekend…and possibly longer...”

“Will!” Beverly almost shouted. She couldn’t believe her friend was digging himself into a huge hole.

“Beverly, I know. I really fucked up. I offered the extended stay in the last email, and he hasn’t responded, so hopefully he thinks it’s a bad idea as well and we can just deal with the weekend.”

Beverly stayed silent while slightly shaking her head. “Will, this isn’t good.”

“Ugh, I know. I really miss him, Beverly. I haven’t seen him in a year.”

Beverly could tell that her friend was struggling with whatever issues stemmed from his relationship with Hannibal. She got up from the chair and sat on the bookshelf ledge closest to Will.

“Will, I don’t know if you want to talk about it, but what the hell is going on between you and Hannibal?” Beverly had taken a hold of Will’s arm and lightly caressed it. Will appreciated that she wanted to listen to him and offer him advice.

Will looked up at her. “Do you still have time?”

Beverly smiled back at him. “I always have time for a friend.”

Will sighed before leaning back in his chair. “It’s a really long story, like back-when-we-first-knew-each-other long.”

Beverly sat back down in the fold up chair across the desk. “Spill it. We can even get lunch together later if the story runs long.”

Will smiled. He was glad he had someone like Beverly to sort out the madness of this situation.

“I’ve never told anyone the entire story out loud. So hopefully I don’t forget anything crucial.” Will started as he looked down at his hands in his lap.

Beverly leaned forward and grinned. “Just start from the beginning and go back if you leave anything out.”

Will sighed again. “So, you remember when I told you that I lived in Lithuania for a few years while my dad was in the army reserves?”

Beverly nodded.

“Okay it starts there. My family became friends with Hannibal’s the last few years I was in middle school. Before starting high school, we moved back to the states to live in New Orleans. Hannibal got accepted into college back in New York and his entire family decided to move with him.”

Will stopped talking for a second, reminiscing about the first couple years he had known Hannibal.

“You know it’s kind of funny now, but we were like brothers. Neither of us had siblings...Hannibal’s sister, Mischa, had died in a car accident when he was a younger. So, it was nice to have each other to lean on when needed.”

Beverly nodded back, indicating that she sympathized with him.

“So, flash forward a few years. Hannibal was 25 and attending the medical school at Mount Sinai in New York. I was in my sophomore year in college, and we planned on myself visiting him for spring break.”

Will went silent. He struggled with the next couple of sentences. He was incredulous that he was telling someone about that week with Hannibal. It had been a life changing moment, but something he kept to himself as a private memory.

“That was when we first…slept together…”

Will sighed again before confessing another tidbit that provided the basis for the complexity of his relationship with Hannibal.

“...Hannibal is also the first person I had ever...really had...sex with…”

“Well, this should be good.” Beverly commented with a grin, scooting her chair closer to the desk.

Part Two

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Flashback to about thirteen years ago…

Will was beside himself. Although he had visited places abroad, due to his dad being a captain in the army reserves, he had never gotten the opportunity to visit New York. Will had saved up enough money to not only take a plane to New York, but enough to sustain himself during his visit with Hannibal. He thought constantly about all the things he wanted to do and see.

He was, however, a little nervous that Hannibal would force him to be social during his visit; he knew Hannibal loved attending parties. However, Hannibal had assured him that they would only go to maybe one or two social gatherings and then spend the rest of the time alone together.

Will was so excited the entire ride, he didn't sleep, even though he had gotten up super early to catch the plane. He occupied his time by mapping out the places he wanted to visit, listening to music, and taking pictures of the land formations outside of his window.

Once the plane landed, Will sent Hannibal a stream of text messages.

Will: we just landed !!!

Will: omg! im so excited

Will: wait…what if i get lost on the subway???

Hannibal: haha chill will. im going to meet you at the airport so you don't get lost ;)

Will smiled and waited for his row to empty out. He grabbed his bag and followed everyone off the plane.

Hannibal had told him to wait in the baggage claim area so that he was easy to find. Will couldn't help his excitement and bounced in place waiting for Hannibal by the baggage chute.

"Will!" Will turned around when he heard his name called.

He watched Hannibal walk in his direction. He hadn't seen his friend since last Christmas, but they video chatted almost every day, and sent each other text messages at least once a day. The regular video calls couldn't compare to seeing Hannibal in person, though. Will grinned as he ran up to greet his friend with a hug. Hannibal hugged him back tightly.

After a brief moment, Hannibal pulled away. "How was the flight?"

Will looked Hannibal directly in the eyes. Hannibal had left his hand resting on his hip, but it didn't bother Will; both had been touchy with each other for as long as he could remember.

"It wasn't too bad. I actually stayed awake the entire time." Will beamed up at Hannibal. He felt Hannibal caress his side as his friend took his bag.

"Well, that's good to hear." Hannibal responded with a smile. He swung Will's bag over his shoulders and led him out toward the air train to get to the subway.

Will and Hannibal rode the subway toward Crown Heights, mostly catching up about life. They reached Hannibal's apartment about an hour or so later.

Hannibal had a difficult time trying to get Will to walk faster once they had gotten off the subway; Will was consumed with every detail about New York. He would stop to gawk at every little moment, comparing it to what he had seen while watching their favorite TV show about a charismatic serial killer living in a fictionalized version of New York City.

The real New York is just as gritty as The Hunt! Will had commented. *The Hunt* was Will and Hannibal's current favorite TV drama. They both watched it religiously, calling each other after each new episode to gawk about the latest murder.

Hannibal led Will up the stairs to his apartment. He lived on the second floor with his roommate, Frederick Chilton, who was also a medical student at Mount Sinai.

Hannibal opened the door to his apartment as he stepped to the side to let Will in. Will's mouth hung open like a cartoon; he had never seen an apartment this nice. The apartment had a large living room attached to a smaller kitchen. Next to the living room was a hallway that led to Hannibal and Frederick's bedrooms and the bathroom. The boys also had a decent sized balcony with a nice view of the other historic residences in the neighborhood.

"Wow this is nicer than I thought it would be!" Will exclaimed, shocked that Hannibal and his roommate could afford so much space. He had just assumed that everyone living in New York had a small apartment.

"Well, Frederick's parents pay most of the rent." Hannibal said through a shrug. He led Will toward his bedroom. He opened the door and set Will's bag down on his bed.

"You don't mind sleeping with me, do you? I can also sleep on the couch if you prefer, and you can take my bed." Hannibal offered.

Will shrugged. He didn't mind sharing a bed with Hannibal. They had done so a few times in the past when their families shared a cabin during their joint vacations.

"Well, I don't want to put you out. Also, your bed is huge. I think we'll be okay if we share." Will answered as he jumped onto the bed, straightening himself out as he rested his arms behind his head.

Hannibal put his hands on his hips and smiled back at his friend. He thought Will was being very cute, like a puppy.

“Okay, we’ll share then.” Hannibal chuckled back at Will, who appeared completely relaxed on his bed.

About a second later, a nicely dressed guy with a perpetual smug expression attached to his face busted into the room, unannounced.

“Well, I see your friend from home finally made it, Hannibal.”

Will watched Hannibal’s roommate walk over toward his friend and attempt to wrap a hand around his waist. Hannibal prevented the move by joining Will on the bed. Initially, Will didn’t notice why Hannibal and his roommate were being so weird with each other.

Hannibal’s roommate huffed before smiling again. Hannibal placed on a hand on Will’s thigh, lightly caressing it.

“Will, Frederick.” Hannibal motioned toward Frederick then back at Will. “Frederick, this is Will.”

Frederick nodded in Will’s direction. “Nice to meet you, Will.”

Will noticed that Frederick seemed a little annoyed, but he couldn’t figure out why. “Same.”

Frederick looked Will up and down before turning his body slightly to look at Hannibal. “So, are you guys going to that party tomorrow night? Should be a doozy.” Frederick leaned up against the wall and smirked.

“Abel’s going, Hannibal…”

Will turned over on his side to face Hannibal, waiting for his friend’s response. To Will, Hannibal seemed annoyed at the mentioning of whoever this Abel was.

Hannibal looked downward before looking back up to answer Frederick.

Will could tell that Hannibal was irritated, typically, from the way his friend’s face usually tensed at the jaw whenever provoked, but he still didn’t understand why Hannibal was so upset. The whole situation was incredibly awkward, so Will figured he should just keep quiet until Frederick left.

“It’s really up to Will.” Hannibal turned to face Will. He didn’t want to push Will if there was a possibility that his friend had changed his mind about going out.

Hannibal’s hand was still on Will’s thigh. Will could see out of the corner of his eye Frederick intensely watching the way Hannibal was touching him.

Suddenly, Hannibal’s demeanor changed; he stopped clenching his jaw. Will could sense his friend was still irritated, however. Will took the opportunity to diffuse the situation as best as he could.

“I actually don’t mind, Hannibal. I’m not that cripplingly anti-social…” Will grinned slightly. He really didn’t feel like going to this party, but he didn’t want to be lame.

“Are you sure?” Hannibal asked.

“Hannibal, I’m fine.” Will rolled his eyes as Hannibal chuckled at him.

Hannibal looked at his watch. “Would you like to get lunch soon?” I was thinking we could do that, then see Central Park.” He asked as he smiled down at Will.

“Sure, that sounds great!” Will nearly shouted before jumping out of the bed. Frederick, with his arms still crossed, just raised an eyebrow at Will’s youthful enthusiasm.

Hannibal looked over at Frederick before getting out of the bed himself. “Frederick, would you like to join us?”

Frederick uncrossed his arms, jamming his hands into the pockets of his jeans, looking super unimpressed with the offer.

“Maybe I’ll just join you two for dinner later…”

Frederick sneered at Hannibal, almost suggesting whether his roommate would be annoyed with him joining them for dinner, but Hannibal didn’t flinch.

Will looked at Hannibal then back at Frederick.

...uh...what the hell is going on…? Will thought to himself, intrigued by the serious stare-down between his friend and his very strange roommate.

“Sure, that would be a *superb* idea, Frederick.” Hannibal answered. Frederick smirked before leaving the room.

“See you two for dinner then.” Will heard him said, halfway down the hallway.

Will stared at the door before looking back at Hannibal. “What was that all about?”

Hannibal sighed before getting off the bed to change out of his shirt. “Frederick can be extremely irritating. He gets off on goading people...don’t pay any attention to it.”

Will waited before speaking again, watching his friend fix his hair in a mirror above the dresser.

“So... who’s this...Abel guy?”

Hannibal turned around to face Will. He seemed annoyed that Will had mentioned Abel. However, he composed himself immediately after his tensed his jaw.

“He’s someone I went out with on *one* date and now it’s a thing.” Hannibal sighed, resting his hands on his hips.

Will sat back on the bed, eyes wide and mouth open. He didn’t know where to start.

“Hannibal, I didn’t know you were into guys. You had so many girlfriends when we were growing up...” Will was incredibly confused.

Hannibal leaned on one leg as he crossed his arms and smiled.

“Well, only so many choices back home.” Hannibal waved off his statement, implying there weren’t too many male options for relationships while living in Lithuania when they were younger.

Will prevented himself from gawking back at Hannibal. He literally had no idea that his friend was possibly bisexual.

“So... then why is this thing with Abel a huge deal now...?” Will asked slowly, still shocked by Hannibal’s first confession.

Hannibal sighed again. “Frederick seems to think that Abel is obsessed with me and does everything in his power to make the situation even more awkward than it needs to be...Abel also attends Mount Sinai, so there’s that.”

Hannibal sat down on the bed with Will. “The date was absolutely terrible. Also, I had to convince myself to take Abel up on the offer beforehand.”

Will laughed nervously. As he listened to Hannibal, he found himself taking the time to point out features on Hannibal’s face he found the most attractive. He had never done that before or well thought about it consciously. Their faces were close, but not too close. Knowing that Hannibal was interested in guys began to suddenly change Will’s perspective on his relationship with his friend.

Will had always assumed he himself was straight; he remembered having only crushes on girls in the past. His relationship with Hannibal had always been close and at times touchy, but nothing physical had happened between the two. Yet, in this moment, Will found himself thinking about Hannibal in ways that had never crossed his mind until now.

“Besides, I only find myself attracted to genuinely interesting people. Abel tries too hard.” Hannibal concluded with a playful smile.

Will smiled back. He spoke before realizing what he was about to say. Thinking about Hannibal clouded his judgement.

I hope you think I’m interesting…”

Hannibal curiously cocked his head to the side and Will blushed. He was embarrassed that he had just admitted something like that out loud.

However, Hannibal didn’t make it any more awkward than it already was. He simply squeezed Will’s shoulder before getting off the bed.

“Of course, I do.” He laughed, “let’s go get something to eat.” Hannibal offered as he made his way over to the door. Will forced a smile back, but he was still incredibly embarrassed.

“Um...yeah.” Will murmured as he followed Hannibal out of the bedroom.

They spent the rest of the afternoon getting lunch from a food truck near Central Park, and hours until dark roaming around the park. Will met a few dogs out playing and/or walking with their owners and Hannibal gave him a history lesson about the construction of the park.

To Will, this was one of the closest moments they had had together in a while since Hannibal moved to New York for medical school, and it was wonderful.

He finally relaxed a little in the afternoon, after Hannibal had told him about Abel, but part of him couldn’t help but notice how attractive his friend really was.

Later that evening…

Before it got too dark, Hannibal and Will made their way back to the apartment. Will sat on the couch in the living room, while Hannibal left to fetch Frederick for dinner, finding his roommate lying on his bed talking on the phone.

Hannibal pointed to his wristwatch, but Frederick waved him off. He stood in the doorway, impatiently waiting for Frederick to finish his conversation.

“Well, who knows how that’ll work out, right Abel?” Frederick nodded a few times, as if Abel could see him through the phone, before ending the call with a slight smile.

Hannibal sighed. “Maybe you should go out with Abel. You seem to mention him regularly.”

Will stopped talking abruptly when his computer pinged with a reply from Hannibal to his last email.

“What? Why did you stop the story?” Beverly wondered. “It sounded like it was getting to the good part...or at least one of them.”

Will didn’t answer her back immediately. He was staring down the notification in his inbox, nervous about Hannibal’s reply to his suggestion that he stay longer next weekend.

“Hannibal just replied to my last email…” Will breathed. He clicked on the message.

> “Ha, it is a little last minute, but that sounds like something I could swing. How about Thursday, the 17th, through Tuesday, the 22nd? The conference begins the evening of the 18th and ends the afternoon of the 20th.”

Beverly leaned forward. “What did he say?”

Will leaned backward into his chair. “He’s fine with staying longer…”

He had forgotten that it was probably a terrible idea that Hannibal was staying longer, but he didn’t care. All he cared about was seeing his friend again.

To Beverly, he looked relieved. She immediately became concerned.

“Will, if you do this, you have to tell Hannibal and Molly about the other.” She cautioned slowly.

Will didn’t hear Beverly at first. All he could think about was Hannibal coming to visit soon.

“Will? Will? Did you hear me?” Will could barely hear Beverly’s voice filter through the memories of being with Hannibal.

I guess I also have to confess that I’ve had a thing for you the last few years. You are cute. Will could hear Hannibal’s distant voice.

Really?

Very. Will’s mind conjured up the sensation he had felt when Hannibal gently massaged their cocks together before they had sex for the first time…

“Will??”

Will perked up. “Oh sorry, Bev. What did you say?”

Beverly sighed. “You need to tell Hannibal and Molly about each other. I think you should talk to Molly about it tonight.”

Will looked at the computer then back at Beverly. He knew she was right, but he didn’t know how to approach the subject without causing another fallout between himself and Hannibal.

The previous fallout was Will’s fault, mostly. He had come clean to his then-girlfriend, Freddie, about his relationship with Hannibal about a year into their relationship. By that time, Freddie and Hannibal could barely stand each other. She would berate Will about his relationship with Hannibal, often viciously calling them “murder boyfriends” because they would spend entire weekends together watching movies and/or TV shows about serial killers, leaving her out, obviously.

Freddie had forced him to choose either herself or Hannibal. Will, still hung up on his issues regarding his relationship with Hannibal, chose Freddie, even though she was horrible to him. He could still remember how upset Hannibal had become when he broke the news to him.

Freddie doesn’t know you the way I know you, Will.

No one knows you the way I know you...

Will ended up breaking up with Freddie shortly after, however, while lying in a hospital bed after his accident. Thank god Beverly had been present to make the situation a little less awkward than it would have been, though it was pretty awkward.

Will sighed. “She’s busy tonight. But I’ll tell her before he flies in, okay?”

Beverly simply looked him in the eyes. Will could tell she was incredulous about him being transparent with Molly.

“Wanna go get lunch and continue your story?” Beverly asked after a few minutes.

Will nodded and followed her out the office.

Chapter End Notes

you guys...

I went back and forth about pairing Will and Freddie Lounds up before his fight with Hannibal, but that was the only pairing that made sense, since she would be horrible to the both of them and facilitate their fallout.

So there you have it, Will is so terrified of his feelings for Hannibal that he's willing to put up with Freddie for a year...

ugh...someone please help Will Graham...we all just want him to be happy...and with Hannibal...

Part Three

Chapter Notes

a shout out to Mads and his lips in this chapter...am I right or am I right, Evertonem ?

--lady_slice

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will and Beverly had left Will's office to get sandwiches at a café on campus. On the way to the café, Beverly probed Will with questions about Hannibal before he continued his story.

"Do you think you always had a crush on Hannibal and didn't realize it until the visit?" Beverly asked as they dodged students late for class.

Will sighed and shrugged. "In retrospect, I think I probably did, and it didn't become obvious until there was a possibility that Hannibal was interested in me. But like I mentioned before, I had just assumed I was straight my entire life before I started sleeping with Hannibal."

Once they approached the café, Beverly walked ahead and opened the door for Will.

"After you, my dear." She motioned inward with her hand.

Will grinned before entering. The café they had chosen to eat lunch was one of his absolute favorites. Beverly thought the food was okay, but the café had a sandwich Will always ordered that he couldn't find anywhere else. He tried recreating the sandwich a few times, but it was a gourmet meal of some sort he didn't have the time or the energy to make perfectly.

This particular sandwich reminded him a little of the sandwiches Hannibal use to make for him and his "little sister," Abigail Hobbs, when they lived in New York. Hannibal's sandwiches were obviously better, but the memory was nice.

Abigail Hobbs was a good kid from a broken home Will had mentored while finishing his master's degree at Columbia. She would come to visit Will and Hannibal on the weekends for their weekly fishing trips, and Hannibal would make lunches for them before they left.

Whenever he thought about the sandwiches Hannibal used to make for them, his mind would wander to a conversation he once had with Abigail a long time ago about Hannibal.

Is Hannibal your boyfriend?

*Um, no, he's not my boyfriend. He's just my best friend…*Will remembered laughing uncontrollably as his cheeks turned red from Abigail's insinuation.

Oh, I mean...I only asked because you live together…

Two people can live together and not be in a relationship, Abigail.

That's true, but you also hug each other… a lot…

Will and Beverly walked over to a table that was nearest to the windows and ordered their food.

"Okay, so you find out that Hannibal went out with this guy, Abel; his roommate Frederick is a giant creep, it sounds like; and now you and Hannibal are getting close." Beverly recounted the details of the first part of Will's story as she placed a napkin on her lap.

Will nodded and grinned. He thought it was kind of funny how engrossed Beverly was with the story.

Before continuing, he peaked again, via his phone, at the email Hannibal sent last.

> "Ha, it is a little last minute, but that sounds like something I could swing. How about Thursday, the 17th, through Tuesday, the 22nd? The conference begins the evening of the 18th and ends the afternoon of the 20th."

Will sighed, turned off his phone and tucked it in his jacket, before returning to the story.

"Okay so that night was the first time Hannibal and I kissed…" He began.

Beverly's eyes widened as she grinned.

"Hannibal's a great kisser, isn't he?" She asked, leaning over the table in anticipation.

Will nodded slowly with a shy smile. "Yes…" His mind quickly ran through the list of other things Hannibal was good at with his mouth—

"I knew it!" Beverly nearly jerked out of her chair with excitement, "there's no way he couldn't be. The one thing I remember the most about him is the shape of his mouth."

Will let out an embarrassed sigh and rolled his eyes. Beverly chuckled.

"Okay, okay. I'm sorry. Please continue your story." She said, resting her chin on her hands.

Hannibal sighed. "Maybe you should go out with Abel. You seem to mention him regularly."

Frederick laughed as he jumped off the bed. He took the time to straighten out his shirt before speaking again.

“Hannibal, I wouldn’t do that to a *friend*.”

Hannibal sighed again. He was over the drama with Abel, so he moved on. “We’re going to order food, are you still joining us?”

Frederick brushed past Hannibal to exit his bedroom. “Sure, why not. Besides your friend is kind of adorable, like in a ‘lost-sad-dopey-eyed-puppy’ sort of way.”

Hannibal rolled his eyes as he followed Frederick out of his room. Hannibal agreed partly with Frederick’s description of Will, but thought his best friend looked cute not lost ...well most of the time anyway...

Later that night…

After the boys finished their dinner, they separated into their respective rooms; Will went with Hannibal into his. Will finished getting ready for bed in the shared bathroom before re-entering Hannibal’s bedroom. He found his friend lying on the bed, in an undershirt and boxers, reading a textbook for class.

Will cautiously approached the bed before getting in. He had seen Hannibal in his boxers before, but his friend’s earlier admission about being attracted to guys was lingering his mind. Hannibal noticed Will entering the room and motioned for him to join him in the bed.

Will nodded as he got in underneath the covers as Hannibal held them up for him. Will snuggled underneath the sheets as Hannibal placed his book on the night stand and turned the night stand light off. They both laid in the dark before Will broke the silence.

“So, I forgot to tell you...I’m sort of seeing someone.” He almost whispered. He felt Hannibal’s body shift in the bed.

“Oh? For how long?” Hannibal asked playfully.

Will noticed and eased up his tension. He didn’t know why he was so nervous being so close to Hannibal all of a sudden. They’ve shared tinier beds in the past.

“Only for a month or so...we haven’t really done much…I mean I’ve kissed her a few times and she’s slept in my bed, but we haven’t really been that physical.” Will explained.

He wasn’t sure why he was telling Hannibal all this; they had talked about girls before, but Will had never discussed the physical details.

“Well, if memory serves me correctly, this sounds like it’s the first potential relationship you’ve had, so it makes sense to be a little nervous at first.” Hannibal assured Will.

Will had never had a girlfriend before. He had kissed a few girls in the past, but his issues with social anxiety prevented him from experiencing a real relationship. Hannibal was fully aware of this; Will would often call him, upset that no one wanted to be with him. Hannibal would always reassure his friend of his qualities.

Will, you're very intelligent, kind, and cute. The right person will eventually come along and will appreciate you for just the way you are.

Will leaned up against Hannibal's body. He appreciated his friend's advice. He felt Hannibal leaned up against him, too, and his hands dampened.

"That's true. I just...I figured she would lose interest soon since I'm not that great...of a kisser...." Will admitted.

"I'm sure you're fine, Will." Hannibal said, returning to his playful tone to be gentle with his friend.

Will shuffled a bit underneath the sheets. He felt his heart starting to thump; his mind told him to take it easy, but for some reason his body compelled him further.

He had been thinking about it all day, what would it be like to kiss Hannibal. He caught himself staring at Hannibal's lips while they were in Central Park earlier that afternoon.

Frederick Law Olmsted with the help of Calvert Vaux designed the park. Hannibal had begun explaining the design history of the park, but Will wasn't paying attention.

Will?

Um? Yes, I'm paying attention. They passed a law to shape the park like a box…?

What?

Uh...sorry…

Haha, that's okay. You seem like you're off in your own little world…

In fact, Will had been off in his own little world, thinking about pressing his lips up against Hannibal's and feeling the slight curve of his friend's mouth. Now, lying in bed with Hannibal, Will gained enough courage to finally experience the feeling.

"Would...would you be able...to show me...you know...how to kiss…the right way...?" Will struggled with his words. He knew he sounded stupid.

He heard Hannibal chuckled a little in the dark, but he was kind about it. "Are you sure? I'm not the girl you're seeing, or even a girl for that matter..."

Will ran a hand through his hair as he let out a laugh. "I guess...not, but it's still similar isn't? And we're just friends..."

Will waited for what seemed like forever. He thought he had screwed things up before Hannibal cupped his face. He felt Hannibal press his lips up against his and slowly suck on his bottom lip. They were now lying sideways, facing face to face.

Will laid still, frozen. He had asked for this, but he hadn't prepared himself for the reality. He struggled to find somewhere to place his hands on Hannibal's body and his eyes were wide with nervousness.

Hannibal, sensing that Will wasn't reciprocating the kiss, pulled back. "Would you like for me to stop?"

He rested a hand on Will's face and lightly caressed it with his thumb. Will felt Hannibal sweep his hair out of his eyes as they laid in complete silence. He felt Hannibal's body slowly push into his, slightly humping his leg. Will felt his body react by pushing back, humping Hannibal's leg.

He shook his head and placed a hand on Hannibal's shoulder. "No, no... sorry. Could we try again?"

Hannibal slowly got on top of Will as he pressed his lips up against his friend's again. Will kept his hands on Hannibal's shoulders as he tried to kiss Hannibal back, but he was still too nervous.

"Will, relax." Hannibal murmured. "Just copy me." Hannibal run a hand through Will's hair, stopping to massage the nape of his neck. Will moaned faintly.

He felt Hannibal grind his hips into his as he was sucked into a lingering kiss. Will pushed back up against Hannibal as he grabbed the nape of his friend's neck. He copied the movement of Hannibal's lips; he slowed down, trying not to attack Hannibal with a flurry of sloppy kisses.

"That's better." Hannibal whispered through the kiss.

Will smiled back as he kissed Hannibal, gliding his hands down Hannibal's backside. Will felt his body reacting to the kiss; he was getting swept up in the sensation of Hannibal kissing him and his own nascent feelings toward their close relationship. He moaned into Hannibal's mouth as he humped Hannibal back.

Will felt himself blacking out from the sexual energy and he couldn't control his cock growing semi-hard—

Suddenly, Will felt Hannibal pull away gently and lay down next to him on the bed.

"Uh...that was...nice…" Will managed after waiting a few seconds to catch his breath, bringing himself back to reality.

Will felt Hannibal wrap an arm around his shoulders, pulling him closer toward his body. "I told you were fine; you just need to relax." Hannibal said, nuzzling his nose in Will's hair.

Will nodded as he felt his eyes grow heavy with sleep. He wasn't sure if Hannibal had felt him getting hard, but in the moment, he wasn't embarrassed. He didn't question himself and he didn't pull away. Will had never felt so close to someone until now and it was soothing.

After a few minutes of Hannibal lightly caressing his side, Will fell asleep on top of his friend's chest.

The next day...

Will woke up in Hannibal's bed alone. He looked from side to side before stretching his body out into an exaggerated yawn. He was immediately hit with tasty breakfast smells filtering through the bedroom door. He smiled as he pushed himself out of the bed and headed out of the bedroom toward the kitchen.

Will found Hannibal standing over by the stove, plating a dish. Taking his time approaching, Will walked up beside him, meekly resting a hand on his shoulder.

"Good morning, Hannibal." Will said through a faint smile.

He was still thinking about the kiss from last night. It had been better than he had expected. He really enjoyed it, actually. It had been more electrifying than any kiss he had experienced before, but now Will was struggling with the fact that it had been with best friend.

However, he tried to appear unbothered by his mixed emotions regarding the kiss. He didn't want his own hang-ups to ruin the visit with Hannibal.

Hannibal looked over and smiled back. "Good morning, did you sleep well?" He asked as he handed Will the breakfast plate he had just prepared.

Will accepted it before walking over to the table in the middle of the kitchen. "Great actually. First time I've slept all the way through the night." He answered, as his hunger overshadowed his hang-ups.

Will started shoveling food into his mouth as soon as he sat down. Hannibal joined him at the table a minute before Frederick walked into the kitchen. He looked at Hannibal then Will before heading over to the counter to grab a plate.

"Well good morning you two. Still coming to the party tonight?" Frederick asked as he sat down at the table, super close to Hannibal. Will tried to keep his face from contorting into a jealous wrinkle of the brow.

Hannibal pulled his seat away a little to make space between himself and Frederick. Will noticed and grinned.

“If Will still wants to, of course.” Hannibal answered. Will watched his friend look over at him. He averted his eyes and blushed when Hannibal smiled.

“I’m fine with that that I suppose...” Will responded, slowly looking back up at Hannibal with a shy smile.

Frederick looked at Will then back at Hannibal. He noticed that the two seemed closer than they had been since Will arrived yesterday. It immediately irritated him.

“Okay then, we should all go together.” Frederick offered with a sly grin.

Hannibal nodded and Will stayed quiet. Something about Frederick’s behavior was bothering him. Will decided to wait to speak again until after Frederick left for class.

“I’ll see you two tonight.” Frederick shot up from the table and walked toward the kitchen sink as he shoveled the last bit of eggs into his mouth.

“Oh, by the way, what do you guys have on the docket today for *la tournée de new york*?” He asked after dropping his plate in the kitchen sink.

Will grimaced at Frederick’s overt pretentiousness, but Hannibal remained poised. Will was amazed at how much patience Hannibal possessed to have someone like Frederick as his roommate.

“I was actually planning to take Will to some of the museums today. Perhaps the American Museum of Natural History first?” Hannibal partly told Frederick as he asked Will.

Will perked up at the idea. “Yeah, sure that sounds great!”

Hannibal smiled at Will while Frederick only huffed. “Make sure you take him to MoMA as well...can’t visit New York for the first time and not go there.”

Will noticed Hannibal’s demeanor change slightly as Frederick mentioned MoMA, but he didn’t understand why at first.

“It really depends on what Will wants to do.” Hannibal responded, taking a sip from his orange juice.

“What’s at MoMA?” Will asked, confused why Hannibal was acting weird about this particular museum.

Frederick laughed, loudly. “Hannibal always takes the people he finds the *most* interesting there.” He walked pass Hannibal, brushing a hand along his shoulders. Hannibal didn’t react.

“I figured he would at least take you.” Frederick concluded as he left the kitchen.

Will watched Frederick leave before turning to face Hannibal. “Um, what?”

Hannibal sighed as he got up from the table to wash their dishes. “Abel and I went on our date there. Honestly, I think Frederick has nothing better to do than cause drama.”

Will sat back in his chair. He now knew what Frederick was insinuating by mentioning MoMA, but it didn't really bother him that there was a possibility that Hannibal might be interested in him beyond the kiss. It actually excited him a little. He took a page out of Hannibal's playbook and attempted to diffuse the situation.

"You would take someone on a first date to a stuffy art museum." Will smirked.

Hannibal turned around and chuckled. Will felt his heart leap a few times watching his best friend smile.

"Really the only interesting thing about MoMA, at the moment, is the building's architecture." Hannibal offered with a slight wave of his hand.

Will got up from the table and walked over to Hannibal. He slowly placed a hand on his friend's waist.

"I much rather use the time to visit the other parks after the natural history museum." He looked up at Hannibal.

Hannibal looked down at him and grinned. "Terrific."

"This Frederick guy is really getting on my nerves." Beverly interjected in the middle of Will's story. "It sounds like *he* had a crush on Hannibal."

Will shrugged and sighed. "Ugh, you have no idea. I'll get there, though. He's the main reason why that visit with Hannibal turned out the way it did...even though it would have helped if Hannibal was completely honest from the start."

Beverly straightened up in her chair. "Why? What happened?"

"I'll get there, I promise." Will responded, playfully gesturing with his hands for Beverly to cool her jets.

He took a sip from his water glass before returning to the story.

"So, Hannibal and I spent the rest of the day museum-touring/park-hopping. We weren't awkward with each other, actually the opposite. The way we had acted with each other the entire day was how we had always been. He was touchy, but it wasn't anything new. I was more than fine with it at this point, obviously, since I realized that I might have feelings for him."

Beverly nodded back, indicating that she understood Will's situation.

"Well, you two sound like you really cared about each other...maybe even still do from the way you've been talking about him..."

Will thought for a moment. “...I do still care about Hannibal...”

Beverly nodded again as she took a from her glass of soda. “Okay, so tell me about this party. I’m sure you were super excited to interact with a bunch of strangers.” She smirked, hinting at Will’s well-established social anxiety.

Will groaned and rolled his eyes a little before continuing the story. “So that night, we went to this party hosted by some of Hannibal’s friends from med school…that’s when I ran into Abel...”

Chapter End Notes

side note: Calvert Vaux's name rhythms with "box"; it's not French, like you would think.

(Usagili....architect!Mads would so say something like this :D)

can't stop thinking about Mads' lips, tho...

Part Four

Chapter Notes

all I'm going to say is...someone please help Will...he just wants to be loved...

Also, ugh...Frederick really freaking sucks...

happy shipping, fellow shipmates

--lady_slice

thanks for reading and commenting you guys :) i'm so happy people are digging this story ! the pressure is on…

Later that night...

Will and Hannibal had gotten back to the apartment a little later than they expected after their day of touring. Frederick was completely annoyed; he had sent a flurry of messages to Hannibal earlier in the afternoon, demanding his roommate to be back around nine so they could go to the party together.

Hannibal, irritated with Frederick, let Will wander a little longer at Prospect Park, playing with an adorable dog who had become attached to Will. After prying his best friend away from the dog, they ended up getting back to the apartment closer to ten after stopping for dinner.

Come on you guys! Your friend still needs to get dressed for the party, Hannibal… Frederick had scolded them as soon as they opened the door to the apartment.

I'm just going to wear what I have on… Will had responded.

Chill, Frederick, I think Will looks great. Hannibal had stepped in, frustrated that Frederick was berating his friend. Will thought it was annoying sometimes when Hannibal protected him, but he appreciated it this time around.

Okay, whatever. Let's just go.

Frederick had called them a car, which was something Will was not used to at all. He was new to Hannibal's and Frederick's lifestyle in New York; well, he knew that Hannibal lived a little outside of his means, but Frederick was an entirely different animal. Will had never seen anyone live so luxuriously. Frederick only wanted to eat at the most expensive restaurants and rarely ever used the subway to get around the city.

About thirty minutes later, the boys finally arrived at the party. They got out of the car and walked up to an apartment. Will could hear music thumping from the building and voices shouting. He winced as they approached the front door; his head already began to hammer from the noise and acrid smell of alcohol.

Ugh...why did I agree to this? Will thought to himself, lingering by the front door.

Hannibal looked back at him and smiled before entering. He took a hold of Will's hand and gently squeezed it.

"We'll only stay for a bit. We could watch a movie later and order a pizza, if you want." Hannibal said through his smile.

Will nodded. He relaxed a little more as Hannibal led him into the house, still holding onto his hand. They walked into the apartment and Will was immediately hit with the vibrations of the music pumping from the stereo and loud drunk voices.

The three of them walked to the back of the apartment toward the kitchen. Both Hannibal and Frederick acknowledged people they knew, while Will meekly stood closely behind Hannibal, slightly nodding his head whenever Hannibal introduced him to someone. Frederick grabbed beers for the three of them and they stood in the kitchen talking to each other.

After a minute or so, Will noticed a girl eyeing him from across the room. He saw her out of the corner of his eye, but then quickly averted his gaze and blushed. Hannibal noticed and only chuckled at Will's embarrassment. Will scooted closer toward Hannibal and Hannibal responded by wrapping an arm around his waist. Frederick noticed and simply rolled his eyes.

"Ugh, please cut it out. I'm already the third wheel." Frederick huffed, taking a sip out of his beer can, looking around for a possible escape from his insufferable (yet strangely alluring) roommate and his annoying little friend.

A minute or two later, a few other medical students walked up to their triangle. After introducing Will, Hannibal talked to the new arrivals as Will quietly sipped out of his beer. Frederick took the opportunity to whisk Will away from the group by side stepping in front of Will to put his arm around his shoulders before leading him away from Hannibal's side.

"Do you like jello shots, Will? You seem to be the type." He pulled Will away from Hannibal and the other medical students.

Will could hardly answer as Frederick dragged him over to the kitchen counter. He looked back at Hannibal who seemed to be consumed in conversation. Frederick noticed Will's caution and laughed loudly.

"Will! I'm not going to hurt you. Besides, you can stand to spend a few minutes away from Hannibal. I would think the two of you would be sick of each other by now." He clapped Will hard on the back.

Will winced, but only smiled back faintly at Frederick. He knew from the first time he had met Frederick, long before the awkwardness transpired, that he was up to no good. However, he figured it would be better to play nice with him so he could fully enjoy his visit with Hannibal.

“Hannibal and I aren’t tied to the hip,” Will retorted, “and sure, I’ll try one…”

“Uh oh, I know how you get with any amount of alcohol.” Beverly added. By this time, their sandwiches had arrived, but Will was too busy talking about the party that he had barely touched his food.

Will knew Beverly was trying to be lighthearted. He laughed. “Yeah...didn’t bode well in my favor this time either...”

Frederick handed Will a jello shot. Will took the paper cup but didn’t know what to do next. Frederick laughed and sighed at Will’s inexperience with alcohol as he grabbed his own jello shot.

“Just suck on it.” Frederick grinned as he licked the jello out of the paper cup.

Will looked at Frederick then back at his own jello shot. He pinched the end of the cup and licked the jello out of the paper. Frederick had given him a blueberry-flavored shot laced with vodka, but he hardly noticed the vodka.

“Wow, these are better than I expected them to be.” Will said as he licked the rest of the shot out of the cup.

Frederick grinned as he handed him another. “Why not try another one. Loosen yourself up.”

Will waited before accepting the shot. He really didn’t want to be lame, but he had never had more than one beer in a setting. Also, he didn’t want to drink too much without Hannibal. He also figured that maybe Hannibal had mentioned something to Frederick earlier about his behavior, so maybe he was trying to be nice? (Of course, Frederick wasn’t.)

Maybe I’ll have a better time if I drink more… Will thought to himself.

Frederick smirked as he picked up another shot for himself. Will sucked down the jello; the strawberry-flavored shot Frederick had chosen for him tasted delicious.

Frederick clapped him hard on the back again, but Will hardly noticed.

“Let’s go check out the rest of this party.” Frederick suggested as he threw their discarded paper cups on the counter.

Will nodded and followed Frederick out into the living room. The room was large enough for people to either sit or dance in the middle of the space. The music was still incredibly loud, but Will didn’t mind so much after the alcohol from the jello shots started to take effect.

Frederick introduced Will to a few people as “Hannibal’s close friend from home.” Will felt himself growing in confidence with his social skills during every interaction. Of course, the two previous jello shots and beer had helped.

“Let’s check out the basement!” Frederick shouted over the music. Will nodded.

He followed Frederick to the basement of the apartment where a group of people were playing beer pong. Frederick led them over to a table with an assortment of alcohol on it. He picked up a bottle of tequila.

“Upstairs is for the wimps. Down here, you can graduate up to the harder stuff.” Frederick commented as he poured the two of them two shots of tequila.

Will had never had tequila before, but at this point, his mind was being controlled by the vodka from the jello shots and another shot seemed like a great idea. He felt himself having more fun than he thought he would at this party.

Why was I so nervous before? God, I need to be less lame...

Will shrugged as if he were cool with taking shots of tequila. “I’m game if you are.”

Wait...what? That was stupid. Will thought to himself.

Frederick only laughed as he handed Will his shot. Will put the shot to his lips, but before he could drink it, Frederick nearly slapped the shot glass out of his hand.

“Wait, Will. You have to lick salt first, then take the shot…” Frederick motioned for Will to lick the back of his hand.

Will, completely confused, licked the back of his hand. Frederick snatched a container of salt from the table and poured a glob of salt on the back of Will’s hand.

“Then after taking the shot, you suck on a lime. Or you could just take the sting.” Frederick waved his hand nonchalantly.

He clinked their glasses together before motioning for Will to follow his lead. Will slowly licked the back of his hand again and swallowed the shot after Frederick. He started to gag as Frederick tossed him a lime.

“Ug!” Was all Will could manage as he sucked on the lime to combat the taste of tequila. He choked a few times before his body stopped convulsing from the alcoholic burn.

Frederick simply laughed. “Exhilarating, uh?”

Will just nodded back. He didn't mind taking the shot as long as he had the lime to suck on after. Actually, the ritual of taking a shot of tequila was a little fun...well that's what he told himself anyway…

"Another perhaps?" Frederick asked.

Will felt his head swim a little, but he felt good. "Sure."

Frederick poured him another….and then another...and after what seemed like a minute, Will had consumed about four more shots of tequila.

He leaned up against the table trying to find his balance. He was laughing at something Frederick had said. His head continued to swim as he slurred his words to response to Frederick's stupid joke.

Will felt Frederick rest a hand on shoulder. "We should check out the music upstairs."

Will nodded as he followed Frederick up the stairs and back to the living room. He forgot to look for Hannibal as they passed through the kitchen.

A guy with a sly grin wearing beard approached them as they entered the room. Will watched Frederick lean over to the guy and whisper something in his ear. The guy smiled slightly before looking back at Will.

"Well, well, well. Nice to meet you, Will *Graham*." The guy held his hand out for Will to shake, raking over the pronunciation of his last name.

Will accepted the handshake, even though he looked incredibly confused.

"Hi, do I know you?" Will had never seen the guy before, but the guy seemed to have some idea who he was.

The guy chuckled. "I'm a friend of Hannibal's." He put his hands on his hips as he stared Will down.

"Abel Gideon."

Will realized that he was talking to the same Abel who had been bothering Hannibal this entire week.

"Oh, you're *that* Abel." Will responded, not really realizing that he had provoked the guy.

Almost immediately, Abel wedged himself into Will's personal space; his back was pushed up against the wall and Frederick, by this time, had disappeared. Will felt Abel's hot, drunk breath on his face.

"It's bizarre that Hannibal would be interested in *you*. You're definitely not his type." He said slowly, staring Will down intensely.

Will couldn't stand how close Abel was to his face and reacted irrationally, due to the assertion and the alcohol. He shoved Abel away from him and Abel responded by grabbing a hold of his collar. Everyone standing around them backed away and started shouting "Fight!"

Abel held onto Will's collar and reached back with a tight fist to hit Will in the face. Will pulled himself away and ducked as Abel tried hitting him. He was in the process of hitting Abel in the face when, suddenly, he felt someone grab him by the arm. It was Hannibal.

Hannibal dragged him out of the living room toward the entry of the apartment. He had been looking for his friend for the past hour; when he found Will in the living room fighting Abel, he knew Frederick had something to do with the altercation. However, he needed to get Will home. He would worry about Frederick later.

Although Hannibal had also been drinking a little too much, he couldn't believe how drunk Will had gotten. It was his responsibility to ensure his friend's safety.

"Will, come on. Let's go home." Hannibal gently guided Will outside of the apartment, holding onto to him by the shoulders. Abel followed, fuming from not being able to fight Will.

"Sorry for getting too close to your little boyfriend, Hannibal." Abel was seething, clenching his fists in rage.

Hannibal turned around to face Abel. "He's drunk, Abel. Back off."

Hannibal stepped in front of Will, who was struggling to stand on his own while also trying to swing his fists at Abel. After failing to hit Abel, Will grabbed onto the back of Hannibal's shirt, attempting to hold himself up. Hannibal reached behind himself to hold onto Will. Abel walked up to Hannibal, penetrating his personal space.

"I think he wants to stay." Abel smirked at Will.

Hannibal backed himself and Will away from Abel, partly to prevent Will from trying to fight Abel and partly to keep Abel from trying to grab Will.

"Hannibal! I-I'm okay!" Will stammered out.

Hannibal sighed. He knew Will wasn't okay and Abel needed to back off. "Abel, you could either willingly get out of my face or I will force you." Hannibal stared intensely at Abel. Abel clenched his fists before backing away, taking the hint.

"Fuck you, Hannibal. Have fun with your sloppy, fucking boy toy. You'll probably end up using him like you used me , you fucking asshole." Abel huffed as he marched back toward the apartment. He shoved a few people out of his way as he stomped his way back inside.

Hannibal watched Abel leave before turning around to hold onto to Will. He walked with him to the nearest street corner and called a taxi. Hannibal wasn't sure if Will had heard Abel's last comment before re-entering the apartment, but it seemed as if Will was more concerned now with not losing the contents of his stomach.

“W-what...about...Frederick?” Will struggled, trying not to throw up all over Hannibal. He felt his stomach attempting to rid his body of all the alcohol he had just consumed, plus whatever he had eaten that day. He was trying to hold onto his side while also trying to hold onto Hannibal’s waist.

“He can figure out his own way home.” Hannibal sighed, holding his friend up.

On the way back to the apartment, Will almost threw up a few times in the car as the taxi driver shouted at them to keep Will from vomiting. Once they reached the apartment, Hannibal handed the driver money and struggled to carry Will up the stairs. Will kept sloping downward at his feet, making it difficult for Hannibal to help him walk. Hannibal propped Will against his side, with one arm wrapped around his waist, as he looked for his keys.

“Hannibal…Hannibal…” Will breathed out hugging onto his friend.

“It’s okay, Will. We’re almost inside.” Hannibal finally found his keys before dragging his helpless, inebriated friend inside.

Hannibal helped Will to his bedroom, taking his jacket and shoes off before laying him down in the bed. Will was moaning and laid like a log on top of the sheets. Hannibal sat down on the edge of the bed and ran a hand through Will’s hair. Will wrapped his hands around Hannibal’s arm.

“Abel is such a fucking jerk. Why did you go out with him?” Will breathed out. He let go of Hannibal’s arm, letting his arms fall heavy to the bed.

Hannibal sighed. He really didn’t want to talk about Abel at the moment.

“I’m going to get you a glass of water and some ibuprofen.” Hannibal kept his hand on the nape of Will’s neck, lightly caressing his friend.

“Are you going to sleep with me?” Will asked, breathing heavily, side-eyeing Hannibal.

“Of course, but I’ll be right back, okay? I’m just going to get you some water.”

Hannibal caressed Will’s neck before getting up from the bed to head toward the kitchen. He poured a glass of water and found a bottle of ibuprofen already sitting out on the counter, probably left out by Frederick by from a previous party.

Hannibal returned to the bedroom and found a completely naked (and fully erect) Will lying on the bed. Hannibal composed himself as he set the glass and medicine down on the nightstand. He averted his eyes as Will squirmed on the bed, biting his bottom lip as he touched himself.

“What, Hannibal? All of a sudden you’re not interested?” Will asked slyly, bunching up the sheets with his fist as he continued to squirm in the bed. By this time, he was slowly stroking his cock while moaning faintly.

Hannibal sighed as he slowly turned to face Will. He thought about how sexy Will looked, but his friend was incredibly drunk. It wouldn’t be right to indulge in his feelings, even

though Will was practically begging him to.

“Maybe I should sleep out on the couch.” Hannibal answered slowly.

Suddenly, Will grabbed him by the arm before he could walk away from the bed. “Why? What did I do wrong?” His eyes began to water.

Hannibal smiled a little as he placed a gentle hand on Will’s arm. He caressed it. “You didn’t do anything. You’ve been drinking...we’ve both been drinking, and I don’t trust myself…” Hannibal explained.

Will held onto to Hannibal tighter. He dug his fingernails into his arm, but Hannibal didn’t flinch.

“Hannibal, I’m okay...I know what I’m asking for…” Will managed through tears.

Hannibal cautiously ran a hand through Will’s hair down to the nape of his neck. He leaned forward and whispered.

“I’m sure you think so, but I’d rather be with you for the first time sober.”

Will gulped as he let go of Hannibal. He fell back onto the pillow and sighed. “I’m a mess...I’m sorry, Hannibal...”

Hannibal smiled. He kept his hand on Will’s neck, lightly massaging him with his thumb. “You’re fine, Will.”

Hannibal lingered before getting up from the bed. “I’ll be out in the living room if you need me, okay?”

Will nodded slowly as Hannibal pulled the covers up the lower half of his body. He rubbed Will’s chest before walking toward the door. He smiled at his friend before turning the light out and closing the door.

Hannibal found a blanket and pillow neatly folded up together already on the couch out in the living room. He unfolded the blanket and slumped down onto the furniture. His head pulsated mostly from having to break up a fight between Abel and Will, but his mind also circled from dealing with his emotions regarding his best friend.

He let his head fall back heavy onto the armrest of the couch. He moaned as he thought about Will lying in his bed naked, touching himself. He reached down near his crotch and slowly stroked his cock through the fabric of his boxers, thinking about the kiss from the other night.

It wasn’t until years later when Hannibal finally told Will that was the night he knew he was in love with him.

Part Five

Chapter Notes

> gotta get the juicy details about Hannibal and Will's relationship history before sharing the "first sex" chapter :p

Will sat silently in his chair, thinking about that night...well as much of it he could remember. Beverly broke the silence after a few minutes.

“You guys...ugh...no wonder you ended up having sex...” Beverly commented as Will reached for his sandwich.

He paused for a moment before taking a bite, thinking about one of the many weekends he had spent with Hannibal and Abigail while living in New York. He sighed to himself as he ate.

Beverly was staring at Will with her chin propped up by her hand, too engaged with the story to touch her own sandwich.

Will sighed again in between chewing. “...I forgot how complicated my relationship with Hannibal was…well still is...”

Will, I love you. His thoughts returned to the first time he and Hannibal had sex…the warmth between their bodies had felt absolutely unbelievable. He had never felt so close to another person before.

That time, Will had only assumed Hannibal told him that he loved him to get him to relax before they started fucking; Will was so nervous that Hannibal had trouble trying to loosen him up first with his fingers. His body was so tensed...he was afraid Hannibal would hate having sex with him.

Hannibal, from time to time had, playfully told Will that he “loved” him while they were growing up together, so it didn’t dawn on Will that this time, when they finally started having sex, Hannibal most likely meant it.

He could hear, in the back of his mind, Hannibal moaning into his neck...he could still feel him holding tightly onto his waist...

Will decided not to tell Beverly that Hannibal had confessed to being in love with him for years. Hannibal had only admitted so during their last fight and it hurt too much to bring it up now.

Freddie doesn’t know you the way I know you, Will.

No one knows you the way I know you…

I knew I was in love with you since that night, however, I fear my feelings are...unrequited...

While retelling the story of his visit, Will was trying to fight back his emotions; he wasn't sure if he was in love with Hannibal. Will couldn't bring himself to even think about it; he was afraid to admit the truth. Afraid of what would happen between the two of them if Will was completely honest with himself.

During the year following his accident, Will tried to forget about Hannibal by throwing himself into his work at the university and going out on more dates. It was easier for him to do the former rather the latter, however...

Will and Hannibal had decided to move to Baltimore together after living in New York for a few years. Circumstances, mostly relating to their friend Alana Bloom, the death of Will's mother, and a one-night stand Will had to make Hannibal jealous, almost forced Will and Hannibal to live apart after years of being roommates.

Eventually, they ended up forgiving each other; however, the lingering issues from New York migrated with them to Baltimore, which ultimately led to their latest fallout. Will remembered back to when he had shouted at Hannibal about how terrible of an idea it was for them to live together. Will had to prevent himself from tearing up as he inwardly recounted the details of the incident, silently eating his sandwich.

When Hannibal left Baltimore to move back to New York after their fight, Will suffered through an intense period of depression. He couldn't figure out how to replace the void left by his friend, so it was easier to keep to himself for some time. Thankfully his friendship with Beverly pulled him out of the abyss.

About a year ago, before Will's accident and his fight with Hannibal, Hannibal and Freddie had been his main source of social interaction, but after essentially breaking up with them both, Will had to rebuild his social life. He had done so with Beverly and Molly; yet the comfortability of his new social circle allowed his mind to wander and think about Hannibal on a constant daily basis.

Anytime he saw reruns of *The Hunt*; anytime he cleaned out his dresser and closet and found clothes that had once belonged to Hannibal; anytime Abigail emailed him, updating him about her adopted family in Philadelphia, asking him to visit when he was free next...anytime he went out his way to walk to this stupid cafe to eat this stupid sandwich that sort of tasted like the ones Hannibal made, but not really...Will thought about his friend, consistently.

And especially now...

"I would have never imagined you trying to seduce someone." Beverly giggled, referring to the night Will tried to seduce Hannibal, attempting to change to the mood of the conversation.

Will smiled, but only a little. He appreciated the attempt, but his emotions were bubbling to the surface.

“Honestly, I only remember taking my clothes off and mumbling something about wanting Hannibal to sleep with me...ugh...and obviously not the innocent kind of sleeping…” He buried his face in his hands.

He also remembered touching himself after Hannibal left the room to retrieve a glass of water and medicine for him. He laid on top of Hannibal’s bed thinking about Hannibal’s lips pressed up against his own, and what it would be like to have sex with his friend, feeling Hannibal slowly hump his body and moan into his mouth through a long wanting kiss.

That night, he was so hard while he was thinking about Hannibal humping and kissing his body, that he wanted to jerk off in his friend’s bed and didn’t care if Hannibal walked in on him in the process. He wanted Hannibal to touch him, kiss and rub his body up against his.

But he didn’t tell Beverly any of this; he was too embarrassed. Also, Will had only scratched the surface of his relationship with Hannibal while describing that week in New York to Beverly. There was so much more tell...but he could only handle one story at a time...

Beverly waited a bit before she spoke again. “My apologies if I offend you, but I really had no idea you were into guys...I mean I haven’t known you that long, but I feel like we would have talked about this by now...”

Will shook his head as he put his sandwich down. He knew why she seemed confused. He himself was still slightly confused about his feelings toward Hannibal and he had known Hannibal for most of his life. His confusion, however, stemmed mostly from his deep desire for his closest friend.

“After that visit with Hannibal, I thought I might be...but...looking back on my past relationships and most of the people I’ve have had sex with, I really think I just have a...weakness for Hannibal.”

“Most?” Beverley asked, intrigued.

Will sighed again. “When I was living in New York, I hooked up with this random guy once to make Hannibal jealous. It was incredibly stupid because the guy wouldn’t stop calling me afterward.” Will slumped back into his chair and rolled his eyes. “He even showed up at our apartment unannounced, in the middle of the night, professing his love for me...I had to call the cops to get him to leave…”

Will looked down at his hands. “...oh...he even...well sort of...got into a fight with Hannibal…”

Beverly’s eyes widened. The “fight” with Hannibal and Will’s hook up was more of an ambush on the guy’s part. Will could tell she wanted to hear the rest of that story, but he needed to finish this current one first.

“I promise I’ll tell you about it later.” Will sighed. To Will, that whole story was...well, awkward, to say the least. He hadn’t realized how much he did care about Hannibal, until he raced to the hospital to be at his friend’s side after getting jumped by his one-night stand.

However, Hannibal was with Alana at the time, and she ended up partly blaming Will for Hannibal's injuries.

Will and Alana made up eventually, especially after she realized that Hannibal was in love with Will and not her. Alana ended up falling in love with her best friend, Margot, actually, after she and Hannibal broke up.

"Wow, hooking up with some stranger at a bar to make someone else jealous? That...*doesn't* sound like you...at all." Beverly was surprised that Will went through the lengths to try to make Hannibal jealous.

"Hannibal was dating someone I had gone out with a few times. She thought I didn't have my shit together and thought he was a better choice, I guess..." Will admitted quietly.

Beverly frowned. "I'm sorry, Will. That's complete bullshit. No one has their shit together."

Will waved it off. "It's all right. I'm over it now and Alana and I are actually better friends now," but then he slapped his forehead, sulking in his past embarrassment.

"Ugh, I was so sloppy. I remember meeting the guy at a bar the three of us went to one night...but besides being with that guy, which wasn't that great, and also a tad strange, I've only really been attracted to women...and Hannibal of course..."

Beverly pondered the thought for a second. "That makes sense. Guys who consider themselves straight can be attracted to other men. Also, Hannibal is very sexy and sounds like he really cared about you—cares about you." She quickly corrected herself.

Will faintly smiled at the thought. "I know…"

Yet, Will couldn't admit to Beverly yet another crucial piece to his complicated history with Hannibal: when they attempted to be "friends with benefits" while living in New York, and of course, as you already guessed it, that backfired in their faces, big fucking time…and is one of the reasons why Will did go through the lengths to make Hannibal jealous...

The deal between the two was that they would only fool around with each other if they weren't serious with someone else...so, since the both of them were too busy to seriously date and spent most of their time either hanging out together or together with Abigail...Will and Hannibal ended up having sex most nights.

The deal was made the night Hannibal had surprised Will with a special dinner for getting through his first year at Columbia. Will, swept up in the romantic atmosphere of the surprise, kissed Hannibal when he seized the opportunity. They ended up fucking on their kitchen floor soon after. After that night, they both rarely went out on dates with other people until their friend Alana came into the picture.

Will had gone out on a few dates with Alana before she started dating Hannibal a few months later. Hannibal "forgot" to tell Will that he had started seeing her; but this was partly due to the unexpected passing of Will's mother.

Hannibal had attended the funeral with Will and their closeness during Will's difficulty in accepting his mother's death resulted in the two having sex when they returned to New York. To Will, that time, however, the sex felt different...

Yet, the next morning, Hannibal finally dropped the bomb that he had gone out on a couple of "brief" dates with Alana before the funeral and intended to continue seeing her.

Hannibal's confession was devastating to Will. While having sex with Hannibal after the funeral, he allowed himself to consider committing fully to his friend, yet he never told Hannibal how he felt. And Hannibal had just assumed that they were just fooling around like they had always been.

Neither of them could admit to each other that they knew they were in love with the other that night...

Hannibal, I'm upset because not only did you go out with someone I went out with behind my back, you also slept with me last night! Will's thoughts wandered back to that terrible morning.

Will, what was so different about this time compared to the other times we've had sex...?

...

...Will?

...nothing... Will had been afraid to tell Hannibal how he felt then, and he was afraid now.

Will's phone buzzed suddenly. He jerked out of his chair as he fumbled in his jacket for the device. His heart was beating loudly, pulsating with nervousness. He was terrified it was Hannibal deciding to cancel his trip to Baltimore next weekend. Will shook slightly as he looked at the notification. Beverly was watching him. She placed a hand on his.

"Will, are you all right?"

Will sighed a moment of relief when he saw that the email was from Kade Purnell, the chair of the department of Psychology at John Hopkins. He immediately rolled his eyes and groaned, however.

Kade Purnell was the bane of Will's and his colleagues' existence. She was good at her job, yet she managed to piss off every single one of the faculty members with her constant demands and surprise evaluations. She even managed to piss off the associate chair, Jack Crawford, who never hid his frustrations with Kade. Jack was probably the only person who could go toe-to-toe with Kade and not fear losing his position.

"It's Kade." Will rolled his eyes again as he scrolled through the message.

"Uh oh...she's probably emailing you about—"

"Fuck! It's my turn for those god awful faculty parties…" An extremely pissed off Will nearly jerked out of his chair again, swiftly cutting of Beverly. He leaned forward and buried

his face in his hands.

Kade came up with a “brilliant” plan, in order to foster unity amongst the faculty, to have each instructor host a “get together” at their place once a month. The idea was overly intrusive and frustrating: asking people to take time out of their busy schedules to host a party for people they barely interacted with.

“Fuck...it’s supposed to be next weekend when Hannibal’s planning to visit...” Will rubbed his temples, stewing in anger.

“Tell her you can’t do next weekend because you’re going to be busy.” Beverly suggested.

Will had been convinced, as he told Beverly about his relationship with Hannibal, that she would use the opportunity to advise him to tell Hannibal that he couldn’t visit the following weekend, and then use the opportunity to get his emotions and relationship in check before seeing his friend again. She did the exact opposite; he didn’t expect that.

I’m so glad I can talk to Beverly about this...

“I can’t...I already switched the date a few times and I’m already on her shit list...” Will sighed, “...for a second I thought you were going to tell me to use the party as an excuse not to see Hannibal next weekend…” He added slowly.

Beverly shrugged. “Will, I’m not going to do that. I’m just offering my advice in terms of being honest, but after everything you’ve told me about Hannibal, I would never prevent you from seeing him again...he’s your closest friend.”

Will smiled faintly. “Thanks Beverly…” He groaned in agony. “What the fuck am I going to do?”

Beverly caressed his hand again. “I can help you with the party, Will. Don’t worry about that. All you need to really worry about is being honest with Molly about Hannibal....”

Will nodded. She was right. He knew she was right, but that wasn’t the point. Will felt himself longing to be with his friend again. He had to figure out a way to juggle both Molly and Hannibal this weekend.

Beverly took a sip from her soda. “Okay, finish the story. It’s getting really good…”

Part Six

Chapter Notes

> this is dedicated to the lovely who left the hundredth kudo on this work. I'm sure you're a fabulous person in real life :D
>
> and also my tumblr peeps who ok'd the details of this story beforehand...you know who you are ;)
>
> happy shipping, fellow shipmates
>
> -- lady_slice

The next day...

Will jerked out of his sleep. He wiped his eyes as he observed his surroundings; he was in Hannibal's bedroom alone. His head throbbed from dehydration as he slowly pushed himself upward out of the bed. He took his time swinging his legs out in front of him.

Oh my god, my head is killing me...

Will could smell someone making breakfast. Well actually, as he looked at the bedside clock, an early lunch.

All of a sudden, he finally realized that he was completely naked...but could only remember snippets of the previous night...

Why am I naked…?

He slowly rose from the bed looking for his shirt and boxers. He found his shirt crumpled up underneath the bed and his boxers thrown to the other side of the room. Flashes of getting into a fight with Abel and falling asleep naked shot through his mind.

He hadn't remembered trying to seduce Hannibal before passing out....

Will slowly put on his shirt and struggled pulling on his boxers before taking his time walking toward the bedroom door. He didn't think to put on pants; he had gotten use to walking around in his underwear during his visit. Frederick was gone most of the time, and he and Hannibal had always been that comfortable with each other.

Will entered the hallway and almost fell over. He steadied himself as he propped his side up against the wall, using it to guide his body toward the kitchen. Once he reached the kitchen,

he saw Hannibal standing in a t-shirt and pair of boxers, making breakfast food. His hair was out of place, but in a cute bed-head sort of way.

Hannibal heard him approach the entry into the kitchen. He turned around and smiled at Will before returning to his cooking.

“Good morning, Will. How’d you sleep?”

Will slid into one of the chairs at the kitchen table. “I feel like I’m going to die. I’m never drinking again...” He buried his head in his arms on top of the table.

Another memory flashed through his mind; he remembered Hannibal trying to carry him to his bed…

Hannibal placed a plate in front of him before sitting across the table. Will perked up at the smell of food but pushed the plate away.

“I don’t think I can eat…”

Hannibal got up from the table. “Maybe you should lie back down.” Will felt a hand caress his back.

He nodded as he let Hannibal guide him back to the bedroom. Will hugged himself up against his friend’s body as Hannibal held onto him tightly. He groaned in pain, thinking about all of the shots he had taken with Frederick at the party.

Hannibal assisted in helping his friend lie back down in the bed. “Did...you sleep...okay?” Will asked, as Hannibal sat down next to him.

Hannibal sighed. “No not really. Our couch is surprisingly not very comfortable.”

Will looked at him as he suddenly remembered why Hannibal had slept out on the couch last night. He felt his cheeks flush with embarrassment.

Abel is such a fucking jerk. Why did you go out with him?

Are you going to sleep with me?

What, Hannibal? All of a sudden, you’re not interested?

“...Hannibal...I-I…” Will babbled, trying to figure out the best thing to say without making the situation even more awkward. He felt his stomach somersault a few times with humiliation.

Hannibal only nodded. He knew why Will was suddenly at a loss for words. “Will, it’s okay. We were both quite inebriated. I just thought it would be best to give you some space.”

Will buried his face in his hands. “Ugh...I am a mess...”

He had never seduced anyone before, and he had tried to do so with his best friend. The events of the night flooded his mind as his brain retold the details; Will discarding his clothes and touching himself while thinking about Hannibal humping his body…

Will groaned to himself.

Hannibal chuckled. “You’re not a mess.”

“You can take a nap in your bed if you want. I can sleep on the couch.” Will slowly pushed himself out of the bed. He felt Hannibal place a hand on his arm to prevent him from going any further.

“No, it’s fine. You need to rest too.” He slid into the bed next to Will.

Will cautiously laid back down as Hannibal snuggled up against him without really touching him. He turned to face Hannibal, who was facing the ceiling.

He felt his heart flutter...thinking about the kiss from the night before last and touching himself...thinking about having sex with his best friend...

Will opened his mouth to speak, but it took him awhile to find the right thing to say.

“Hannibal...I’m kind of...confused...you know...about you and...me…” He finally admitted.

Hannibal turned to face him. Will lost himself in the gleam of his friend’s eyes, shaped like smooth round opals.

“We are very close.” Hannibal responded with hesitancy.

Will scooted closer toward his friend; he knew Hannibal could feel the low thumping of his heart.

“More than close...we made out the night before last…” Will whispered. “I’m really not sure why I asked you to kiss me...I wouldn’t have done that with anyone I didn’t have feelings for…”

Hannibal tilted his head and grinned. “You have feelings for me?” He asked playfully.

Will nervously laughed back as he gently shoved Hannibal. “Ugh, Hannibal....I’m trying to be serious…”

They both chuckled for a bit before returning to complete silence. Will put his hand on Hannibal’s chest and lightly caressed it.

Hannibal cupped his face and smiled. “Let me know how far you want me to go…” He whispered after a minute of silence, leaning in to kiss Will.

Will accepted the kiss as he slid his hand down Hannibal’s body toward his waist. He couldn’t control himself as he let out a soft moan from the sensation. Hannibal responded by pulling him closer.

Will let his tongue wander into Hannibal's mouth; he wasn't sure if it was too much until Hannibal did the same. He felt Hannibal slide on top of him, grinding his hips slowly into his crotch. Will let his hands wander up and down Hannibal's back.

"You seem more relaxed." Hannibal whispered through their kiss.

Will moved his head away slightly as Hannibal kissed his neck. "My heart's still beating heavily though...you can probably feel it..."

Hannibal leaned over to give Will a long kiss on the lips before pulling away. He slowly ran a hand through Will's hair. Will felt him grinding his hips downward slowly as his friend looked him in the eyes.

"I guess I'll have to admit I'm a little nervous as well." Hannibal offered quietly.

Will was shocked. Hannibal always seemed so sure of himself. "I don't know why you would be nervous with me…" He answered meekly.

Hannibal continued to stare down at him. A sly little smile appeared as he replied, "I guess I also have to confess that I've had a 'thing' for you the last few years. You are cute."

Will had to force himself from gawking. He had no clue someone like Hannibal would be interested in him. "Really?"

Hannibal nodded. He then leaned back down to kiss Will. Will felt himself getting hard in response to his friend's admission along with the kiss. He was sure Hannibal could feel him.

"*Very*." Hannibal responded through the kiss.

Will pushed up against Hannibal as he let his hips grind into his friend's. He let himself moan a little louder as Hannibal reached down between them and freed Will's cock from his boxers. He rubbed himself up against Will as he slowly stroked his shaft. Will groaned with pleasure, forgetting to kiss Hannibal back. Hannibal didn't seem to mind, though, as he left kisses along Will's neck.

"Omg...that feels so good…" Will breathed.

Hannibal moaned into the crook of Will's neck. He felt Hannibal slowly hump his side as he rubbed his cock with his own. Hannibal kissed Will's shoulder, using his free hand to rub the nape of his friend's neck.

Will had his eyes closed. The sensation of getting his cock rubbed was overwhelming. He felt the weight of Hannibal's body shift as a wet hole replaced the hand on his shaft. Will opened his eyes and saw Hannibal sucking on his cock. He couldn't control himself. This was the first time he had ever received a blow job, and this one being performed by Hannibal was incredibly hot.

Will pushed himself up into Hannibal's mouth, as Hannibal gently held him down with one hand. Hearing Hannibal moan into his lap and the sensation of the blow job itself was mind blowing.

“Ah...oh…oh...my god…” Will managed between gasps.

Will pressed himself up against the bed, writhing in pleasure as Hannibal licked up and down his cock for a few more minutes.

After another minute or so, Hannibal kissed his way up Will’s body. “Tell me what you want to do.” He asked in a soft whisper.

Will knew Hannibal was talking about having sex. Yet, he wasn’t sure how to ask for it. This was his first time.

Will held onto Hannibal. “This is my...first time…” He said meekly.

Hannibal cupped his face as he humped Will’s body. “I’m flexible, but it’s really up to you.”

Will wasn’t sure what Hannibal had meant. He had no idea that Hannibal was asking him if he wanted to get fucked or the other way around.

“Uh...okay….” Will responded.

Hannibal chuckled. “Would you want to fuck me or do you want me to fuck you?”

Will’s eyes widened. He hadn't expected his friend to be so frank and so crass. But his body reacted more to thought of Hannibal fucking him. That was something he definitely didn’t expect.

Will gulped. He had no idea what it would feel like to experience Hannibal inside of him, but he really wanted to find out.

“Me?...um….” Will steadied himself. “Could you fuck me?”

Hannibal leaned downward to kiss him on the lips again. “Of course.”

Will gulped again as he felt Hannibal get off the bed and retrieve a bottle of lube from his dresser. He watched Hannibal walk back to the bed, taking his shirt and boxers off in the process. Will was completely frozen in place, but his cock leapt with anticipation.

Hannibal got back on the bed and rubbed Will’s cock slowly as he looked back at him.

“I’m not going to lie to you. It’s going to hurt the first time.” Hannibal explained.

Will nodded his head. He had no idea what to expect, but his mind kept wandering down to the sensation of Hannibal rubbing his shaft.

Hannibal leaned over and cupped Will’s face. “But I’ll try to be as gentle as possible...let me know when you what to stop.” He whispered.

All Will could do was nod yes. His chest ached as if his heart was trying to free itself. He closed his eyes as he felt Hannibal remove his boxers, which were half way down his ass, spread his legs apart, and tilt his hips upward, propping him up with a pillow.

Will squeezed his eyes tighter as he heard the cap of the lube snap open. He started to breath deeper as he felt Hannibal's fingers hover near his hole. He gripped onto Hannibal's arm.

"Will, I haven't done anything yet, but you're going to need to relax." Hannibal said as playfully as possible.

Will nodded yes again as he loosened the grasp on Hannibal's arm. Hannibal slowly slid two fingers inside of him.

Will felt his body react in a various ways; he felt his body shudder a bit with pleasure while also fighting to push Hannibal out.

He moaned, but he knew he needed to relax more. He felt Hannibal caress his face with his free hand.

"Will, relax . It'll feel better if you do. I promise."

Will nodded again. He breathed out slowly and relaxed his muscles. He felt Hannibal's fingers enter further.

"That's better." Hannibal murmured.

Will exhaled deeply; his body relaxed even more as Hannibal's fingers rubbed the inside of his hole. He felt Hannibal scissor his fingers then slowly pump them in out of his ass. Will moaned slightly. It felt a lot different than he had expected. But it felt good.

Will whimpered. He felt Hannibal start to suck on his cock again as he fucked Will with his fingers. His mind nearly exploded.

He placed his hands on his friend's shoulder. "Hannibal...I'm sorry. I think that's too much." Will breathed. Hannibal looked up at him, slowly letting his cock fall out of his mouth.

Will groaned. "Hah...ah…."

"Okay, I'll just use my fingers." Hannibal whispered as he reached up to kiss Will.

Will kissed him back as Hannibal thrust his fingers in and out of his ass. Will placed a hand on Hannibal's back, slowly raking his fingers down toward Hannibal's waist. Will let his body push back onto Hannibal's fingers, humping his friend's fingers as they slid in and out of him.

"Ah...hah...oh god…" He whimpered again.

"Would you like to go further or should we stop?" Hannibal asked. Will could tell that he was concerned about over doing it.

Will shook his head. He definitely wanted this. He had wanted it last night…well actually he had wanted since they kissed each other for the first time.

Will looked into Hannibal's eyes. "No, I want to do this…"

Hannibal smiled as he leaned downward to kiss Will again. Will rubbed the back of his friend's neck as Hannibal continued to fuck him with his fingers.

After a few minutes, Hannibal pulled away to align his body with Will's. Will watched Hannibal stroke himself before slicking his cock with the lube.

Will breathed deeply as Hannibal scooted closer toward his body. Hannibal lifted his body up slightly, holding onto his legs.

Will closed his eyes again as he felt the tip of Hannibal's cock enter his ass. He stopped breathing. Hannibal rubbed his chest before entering further; he felt his friend lean downward again.

"Will, I love you." Hannibal murmured.

Will gulped as he opened his eyes. He looked up at Hannibal, breathing slowly. In the past, Hannibal had only said he loved him in jest, but this time it made him feel comfortable to be vulnerable with his best friend.

And honestly, up until this point, Will did love Hannibal like a very close friend. He wouldn't start fighting his feelings of possibly being in love with Hannibal until after the visit.

"I-I love you, too."

As Will reciprocated his love for his friend, his body relaxed even more and Hannibal pushed himself inside. Will squeezed his legs around Hannibal's body as Hannibal slowly pumped his cock in out of him. Will moaned louder than he had before and felt Hannibal kiss his neck. He gripped his own cock and stroked it in time with Hannibal fucking him.

"Hah…oh...ah….fuck…"

Will heard Hannibal moaning along with him.

His body couldn't take the feeling. Will had no idea how to stop his body from reacting. An unfamiliar tensing feeling shot through his body. Suddenly, Will recognized it as the same feeling he usually had while masturbating.

"Hannibal, Hannibal…I think...I might come…" Will breathed.

Before Hannibal could respond, Will came all over his chest. He shuddered underneath his friend, moaning heavily from the release.

"Oh…oh...my fucking god!" Will nearly shouted, holding onto his cock, feeling his warm cum trickle down his hand.

Hannibal held onto him as his body convulsed through the orgasm. Will closed his eyes until he finished. He laid on the bed, panting heavily.

Will felt Hannibal lay down next him. A hand caressed his face which Will leaned into and moaned slightly, still holding onto to his now flaccid cock, flushed red from the orgasm.

“Oh my god, Hannibal...” Will breathed. “That felt...amazing.”

He felt Hannibal kiss his neck and linger up against his skin. “I’m glad.”

Will suddenly realized that Hannibal didn’t mention coming. “Hannibal...did you...come?”

Hannibal chuckled. “A bit. I was more worried about making you feel comfortable.”

Will sighed, nearly slapping himself in the forehead from embarrassment. “I’m so lame...”

Hannibal kissed him on the lips. “You’re not lame. It was your first time. You did better than I expected. And if it’ll make you feel better…” He hovered over Will’s lips, “you also feel amazing.”

Will felt his heart melt. He kissed Hannibal him back as they made out in the bed. Will couldn’t control himself as he humped Hannibal while he kissed him, wanting to feel every part of his friend’s body. After a moment, Hannibal gently broke away.

“You should probably nap.” He whispered, pulling Will close up against his chest. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s waist and squeezed. He felt incredible, even though his first time hurt a little. But it felt incredible because he was with Hannibal.

While having sex with Hannibal, Will had forgotten that he wasn’t feeling well from the night before. His head hammered faintly again from his hangover as the euphoria of getting fucked by Hannibal slowly wore off.

“Yeah, you’re probably right.” Will whispered still holding onto Hannibal’s waist.

Hannibal nuzzled his nose in Will’s hair. “I’m always right.”

Will laughed as he playfully shoved Hannibal. He turned over on his side and felt Hannibal spoon him from behind. They both fell asleep on the bed embracing each other, with Hannibal slowly caressing Will’s body from behind.

Part Seven

A few hours later…

Hannibal woke up after napping with Will for a few hours. He gently rolled his peacefully, sleeping friend off his arm and repositioned the blankets on top of him before slowly rising from the bed. He quietly tiptoed out of the bedroom, not to disturb Will, and headed toward the kitchen.

Hannibal walked into the kitchen and found Frederick leaning against the kitchen counter, drinking a coffee he had made with his expensive espresso machine while thumbing through a men's fashion magazine. Hannibal stopped a few feet short before looking Frederick dead in the eye. Frederick noticed and only huffed as he placed his coffee on the counter.

"How's young William?" Frederick smirked.

Hannibal, remaining poised, cocked his head to the side before walking over to a cabinet to retrieve two glasses.

"Frederick, I know you're the one who encouraged Will to drink more than he was capable of." He answered.

Frederick grinned as he clenched the counter behind himself. "It's not my fault he tried to fight Abel. Shouldn't have tried to provoke the guy, if you want my opinion." He finished with placing a hand on his chest, as if he were completely innocent in the matter.

Hannibal turned around to face him. Frederick noticed that Hannibal didn't seem bothered by his last statement so he figured he would try harder to piss his roommate off.

Although Hannibal and Frederick were friends…well...scratch that…Hannibal and Frederick were the classic definition of frenemies; they were "friends" on the surface but would try to one up the other at any given opportunity.

It was especially tensed when they were in class. Hannibal would often correct Frederick over the particulars and Frederick would often gloat about an answer he knew and no one else did, especially if Hannibal was stumped, which was rare.

Their history was also a little awkward, as you probably already guessed, but not as awkward as Hannibal's relationship with Will, obviously.

Lately, Hannibal could barely tolerate Frederick. They were only really roommates because Frederick's father worked with Hannibal's father on a few projects in the past, and Hannibal's parents basically pressured him into accepting Frederick's roommate proposal.

But what really made the situation awkward between the two was that Frederick and Hannibal had gone out on a few dates about a year ago, all of which were completely terrible. Frederick constantly talked about himself the entire time and they argued over where they

should go for dinner, or which movie they should see, or whether they wanted to see the modern art exhibit at the Guggenheim or the exhibit on old painting masters at the Met.

The drama from a failed potential romantic relationship fueled their roommate tension along with Frederick's overt pretentiousness and Hannibal's current dating life. It was apparent that Frederick was a little jealous whenever Hannibal went out with someone.

However, Frederick thought it was ridiculous and hilarious that Hannibal went out with Abel. He considered Abel to be beneath himself and Hannibal and thought that Hannibal was debasing himself for even giving Abel a chance.

However, they never had a serious problem until Will came to visit.

Hannibal, in passing, had told Frederick a week before that his best friend would be visiting for about a week.

Didn't know you were capable of having a best friend, Hannibal. Frederick had smirked.

I put up with you, don't I? I only point out your faults when necessary...it just so happens to be a good deal of the time.

Let's hope your "friend" has more tact than you. We can only hope for such a person associated with Hannibal Lecter…

Frederick, you follow me around everywhere, therefore, you are associated with me, which means you also lack "tact" according to your artful analysis.

…

Yes, Frederick?

Whatever, Hannibal.

After his date with Abel, Hannibal ended up telling Frederick that he had a crush on Will. This was after the two had shared a bottle of wine and Frederick probed Hannibal on the details regarding his "best" friend. Ever since then, Frederick had been acting bizarre.

Hannibal noticed the change in Frederick's demeanor, but decided not mention any of it to Will, along with his past history with Frederick. He figured he didn't need to. Especially since it would only make Will paranoid, and he knew how sensitive his friend could be.

Hannibal really didn't want to have to deal with Frederick while Will was visiting, however, Frederick's behavior at the party last night was unconscionable. A "light" warning would be enough to force his roommate to back off for the time being.

So, instead of responding to Frederick right away, Hannibal walked over to the fridge and filled both glasses with water from the filter. He took a sip out of one before walking back over toward his roommate.

He inched his face into Frederick's personal space, which caused Frederick to attempt to back away, but he couldn't go far since he was propped up against the kitchen counter.

"Honestly, Frederick, your pettiness is highly unattractive. You should quit before something terrible happens to you." Hannibal said before backing away with a slight smile.

Frederick contorted his face into a twisted frown. He composed himself, trying not to give Hannibal an iota of gratification. He hated that Hannibal seemed to always get his way.

"Fuck off, Hannibal. You think you know everything." Was all that he could manage before walking past Hannibal in a huff to exit the kitchen.

Usually, their "arguments" would transpire more or less along the same line, with Hannibal often getting the upper hand over Frederick. Frederick fumed, but decided he would wait to get back at Hannibal.

He knew that Hannibal probably "forgot" to mention the details of his date with Abel to his "best" friend. So, Frederick figured he should be honest with "young William," since his closest friend refused to be.

Will turned on the light to his office. He walked over toward his desk as Beverly followed him in.

"So, the two of you have sex and then what? You said before that that Frederick jerk made things more complicated between you and Hannibal…" Beverly started as she plopped down in the chair across Will's desk.

Will sat down at his desk and turned on his computer. He scrolled through the emails in his inbox.

"...oh and you also mentioned something about Hannibal not being honest from the beginning…" Beverly quietly concluded.

Will wasn't really paying attention. He was staring at the last email Hannibal had sent him.

> "Ha, it is a little last minute, but that sounds like something I could swing. How about Thursday, the 17th, through Tuesday, the 22nd? The conference begins the evening of the 18th and ends the afternoon of the 20th."

Beverly noticed that Will wasn't paying attention. "Will, are you listening to me?"

"Uh? Oh sorry...yeah Frederick said something to me, basically feeding the fears I had concerning Hannibal and relationships in general...but then again Hannibal "forgot" to tell me something about Abel..." Will rolled his eyes when he said the word "forgot".

Throughout their entire relationship, even before dating Alana behind Will's back, Hannibal was notorious for not being completely honest from time to time. Even though they were mostly there for each other, especially during their rough patches, Hannibal had always managed to keep something from Will.

Either he would leave something out from truth, doing so in order to "protect" Will from hurting his feelings, or wait to tell Will, when it was too late, how he was feeling about a particular situation which would lead to a huge fight.

But then again, Will wasn't always totally honest with Hannibal neither. They had a habit of basically lying to each other and themselves, especially regarding their relationship.

Beverly looked at Will before looking over at his computer. "Are you going to email him back?"

Will sighed. He leaned back into his chair. "Not yet." He closed out of the email window on his computer.

"I'll email him later tonight..."

Will was thinking about the first time he had sex with Hannibal. He didn't delve into the details with Beverly, but all he could think about was the way Hannibal had looked at him when he said he loved him.

Even given Hannibal's faults (and Will knew he wasn't without his own), he had been there for Will more than any other person had been in his entire life. Their relationship was special; it had been before they started having sex and it still was even though they hadn't spoken to each other in over a year.

He knew Hannibal cared about him and would do anything for him. Will felt the same, but for some reason, it was difficult for him to fully commit to a relationship with Hannibal. It scared him that there was a possibility, if they were completely honest with each other and things didn't work out, he would never see Hannibal again. The thought tormented him and was the reason why he had kept Hannibal at an arm's length most of his adult life.

He thought it would be easy having casual sex with Hannibal while they were living in New York, but anytime they were together, or had Abigail over for the weekend...or anytime they all cooked dinner together, acting like a perfect little family...Will struggled to keep Hannibal at an arm's length...

He knew it was a bad idea when they agreed to be "friends with benefits", but Will couldn't deny his attraction to his friend. The last time they had sex was after they returned home from his mother's funeral and Will had been thinking about it a lot lately.

He remembered almost confessing to Hannibal, while they were intimate, that he was in love with him and wanted to be with him, but he didn't…

Thinking about that night shot a current of pain through Will's heart and he had to rub his chest to dull the aching feeling.

“I would repeat what I said to you earlier, but this thing with Hannibal is deeper than I expected. You seem like you still have feelings for him…” Beverly said quietly.

Will sighed and looked around his office. She was right. He had been stuffing his feelings about Hannibal down in his chest ever since their fight. Talking about the visit out loud drudged up a mound of feelings he had tried to suppress after Hannibal left.

...I’m so fucked…

He struggled to figure out how he was going to get through this weekend with Hannibal without indulging into his feelings.

“I know...I just don’t know what to do. I can’t just tell him he can’t come now. Besides I miss just being around him.”

“You have to figure out what you want to do. Do you want to be with Molly or do you want to re-explore your feelings with Hannibal?” Beverly posited.

Will thought for a moment. He was afraid of telling Beverly how he really felt about the situation.

“Could I finish the story first? I need to re-visit my feelings. This is bringing up so many emotions.” He looked down at his hands and swiveled from side to side in his chair.

Beverly nodded as she sat back in the chair. “Of course.”

Will sighed again before continuing the story.

Hannibal took a few minutes to himself before exiting the kitchen to return to his bedroom. He found Will, still sleeping soundly on the bed. He smiled before getting back into the bed as quietly as possible, but the weight shift aroused Will from his sleep.

Will turned over on his side to look at his friend as Hannibal slid back down into the sheets. Will scooted closer toward Hannibal, grinning from being so close to his best friend a few hours before.

“Where’d ya go?” Will asked as he placed a hand on Hannibal’s chest and caressed it.

Hannibal smiled and handed Will a glass of water. “Just getting us water.”

Will sat up in the bed and chugged the glass of water. Hannibal chuckled as he sipped from his own. Will handed him his empty glass and snuggled back down into the bed. Hannibal set his glass back down on the nightstand before wrapping his limbs around Will’s body.

Will untangled himself after a few minutes of cuddling and kissed his way down Hannibal's chest, past his waist, and stopped about inch away from his friend's cock.

He thought for a moment what it would be like to suck on Hannibal's cock. He wasn't sure how to go about it, however.

Hannibal was watching him linger, tangling a hand in Will's hair.

"...what's it like?" Will asked, but he was whispering mostly to himself.

"What was that?" Hannibal responded softly, tugging gently at his friend's hair.

Will cleared his throat as he straightened up a bit to look Hannibal in the eyes.

"W-what's it like...you know….to…" He paused for a second. He was so nervous to ask Hannibal if he could suck on his cock.

"...what's it like to give a…blow job…?" Will finally let out. He immediately looked back down at Hannibal's crotch, flushed with embarrassment before realizing that he was staring at his friend's crotch. He quickly averted his eyes.

Hannibal slid his hand down from the top of Will's head to cup his cheek. He gently nudged Will to look back at him.

Hannibal smiled. "Will, it's all right. You don't have to be nervous with me…" He leaned back on his forearm. "I think it's great, if it's with the right person, of course."

"S-so it was fine with me then?" Will stammered. He thought about how juvenile he possibly came across.

Ugh...I'm so not good at this...what's wrong with me?!

Hannibal chuckled. "It was better than fine, Will."

Will's cheeks flushed red again. He wanted to ask Hannibal if he could suck on his cock, but he was failing miserably. He thought about just going ahead and doing it, but he didn't want to do it the wrong way.

Hannibal noticed Will wavering. He figured that his friend wanted to try it but didn't know where to start.

"Do you remember what I did for you?" Hannibal asked.

Will nodded. He was still super embarrassed for not being forthcoming.

Hannibal smiled and cupped his face. "Try that." He said softly.

Will nodded again as he slowly reached to rub Hannibal's crotch. He had to prevent himself from seeming overly eager; he was afraid Hannibal would get turned off quickly if he wasn't smooth about this.

He began to rub Hannibal's crotch which elicited a faint moan from his friend. Will took it has a good sign. He scooted up further on Hannibal's body as he sped up the rubbing motion with his hand. He felt Hannibal's cock growing hard which promoted a gleeful response from his own cock.

Will reached up to kiss Hannibal before pulling his cock out of boxers. He rubbed the shaft a little longer before scooting back down to pleasure his friend with his mouth. He closed his eyes and put Hannibal into his mouth. The sensation was overwhelming; he hadn't expected that.

Hannibal was correct when he mentioned being with the right person…

Will straddled Hannibal as he bobbed up and down, slowly taking his time. He wanted to touch himself; hearing Hannibal moan as he licked up and down his shaft made it difficult not to. Will was really hard, but he wanted to savor this moment for as long as possible.

He placed on hand on Hannibal's waist, caressing his side, while he placed the other hand around the base of Hannibal's cock. He stopped licking his friend for a second.

"Is this okay?" Will asked, genuinely concerned what Hannibal thought about it.

Hannibal looked at him and grinned. "It's better than okay, trust me."

Will's heart flipped around a few times; he would never get over the way Hannibal always smiled at him. He smiled back before leaning back down to suck on Hannibal more.

He wasn't sure how long he should keep going; he figured Hannibal wasn't lying about enjoying himself because his cock was also rock hard, and he was moaning like crazy. Will was amazed that he could make someone like Hannibal feel this great.

Will moaned as he continued to suck on Hannibal. He squirmed a bit on top of his friend. His own cock ached for sexual gratification.

Hannibal was watching him the entire time, but Will had his eyes closed.

"Will, you can touch yourself." He murmured softly.

Will looked up at him and nodded. He reached down in between his legs and gripped his cock. He had to prevent himself from coming on the spot; Will had his eyes opened by this time and was watching Hannibal watching him. Hannibal was smiling slightly while he rubbed Will's head, and Will moaned more into his lap.

He felt Hannibal's body tense. He thought maybe Hannibal was about to come, but he didn't want to stop to ask, so he sped up bobbing up and down on his friend's cock. Hannibal moaned more which caused Will to grip his own cock harder and rub it up and down in the same motion as he was licking up and down Hannibal.

He felt Hannibal tug a little harder on his hair, and after a few more minutes of sexual ecstasy, during which Will blacked out from, Hannibal came into his mouth. Will shot back to

reality as he came along with his friend. He tried to slurp up Hannibal's cum, but couldn't catch all of it.

He felt his body convulsing from the orgasm, and he found it difficult trying to swallow, while also reeling from his own release.

He heard Hannibal chuckling. "Will, it's okay...I probably should have said something, but I didn't expect you to swallow."

Will laid down next to Hannibal as the latter cleaned himself off with a tissue after handing Will one.

Will was smiling, more than he had ever before. He felt incredible that he had managed to make Hannibal come. He wrapped his arms around his friend.

"So it felt good?" He eagerly asked, genuinely wanting to know that it did.

Hannibal hugged him back and laughed a little. "Yes, Will. It felt wonderful." He kissed Will on the top of his head.

Will felt amazing. He jumped off the bed, flashing a huge smile at Hannibal.

"Let's go to Central Park again for a bit." He said as he threw a shirt at his friend.

Hannibal smirked. He thought about how cute Will was. "Sure."

Hannibal managed to grab a hold of Will before he walked away from bed. He drew Will close to him and wrapped both arms around his waist, kissing his body. Will pushed Hannibal back onto to the bed and they made out a bit before leaving for the park.

Part Eight

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A couple of days later…

After further exploring their nascent intimacy, Will and Hannibal had been acting like a regular couple the last few days of Will's visit. Hannibal took his friend to see all of the touristy sights in the city. Will always found ways to sneak little kisses in between walks to the museums, while they were sharing a meal, or while they sat admiring the latest view. Wherever they went, Hannibal always had his hand wrapped around Will's waist or shoulder and Will always snuggled up against his friend.

They didn't have sex again the next couple of nights; Will was still too nervous to ask for it first. They would touch each other, and Hannibal sucked on his cock a few times without going any further unless Will initiated.

Will wanted to go further; dry humping Hannibal the last couple of nights was incredibly hot and he came every time, but all he could think about now was fucking his best friend.

Another thing on Will's mind was the possibility of being in a relationship with Hannibal. He knew he would have somewhat of a tough time not seeing him every day, since they would be in a long-distance relationship for another year or so. Will knew he was paranoid about relationships in general, but he promised himself that he would try to trust Hannibal; they had been through so much together, so being in a romantic relationship shouldn't be any different.

After graduating from college, he figured he could move to New York and live with Hannibal. He wanted to go to graduate school after college and the thought of being in New York with Hannibal while doing so was an enticing idea.

However, he was too afraid to ask Hannibal about being a relationship with him. Hannibal could have anyone really. He thought about bringing up the idea of moving to New York first to see how his friend felt about it.

So, I'm thinking about going to grad school after college. Will had casually mentioned to Hannibal while they were eating lunch.

I think you should, you would do well.

...I'm looking at schools in New York...along with others around the country, of course…

Well, if you get into school in New York, we should move in together...if you would like to, that is…

Will hadn't expected Hannibal to mention moving in together first; he was fully expecting to have to ease in the idea.

...that would be great, actually…you wouldn't have to deal with Frederick anymore… Will had playfully responded, trying not to let his excitement show through a half grin.

If only that were a possibility now…

Will was beside himself. He now had enough courage to ask Hannibal to be his boyfriend. He decided he would pop the question later that night…

Later that night...

During the last party they attended, at the behest of Frederick, Hannibal managed to get Will to dance with him. Will begrudgingly accepted; he already didn't want to be at this party and the thought of dancing in front of a bunch of strangers sounded like hell. Also, Will was anxious about running into Abel again.

Hannibal had assured him not to worry about Abel and promised that they wouldn't stay too long so they could have the apartment to themselves the rest of the night.

Hannibal, I really don't know how to dance… Will whined as he let Hannibal drag him over where a few people were dancing.

Just have fun with it and you'll be pleasantly surprised. Hannibal had quipped back, gently squeezing his hand.

After a few minutes of awkward grinding up against his friend, Will finally loosened up. He couldn't help himself as Hannibal humped his leg, squeezing his body to the vibrations of the music. At one point, Hannibal leaned in for a kiss and Will accepted. Their bodies intertwined with one another as they dry humped to the music while making out heavily. Will could feel himself getting hard, and to his surprise, Hannibal as well.

Will pulled away a bit, leaving his hand on the nape of his friend's neck. "Could we go home early? I want to be alone with you…" All he could think about was what it would feel like being inside his friend.

Hannibal slowly nodded back as he leaned in to give Will another kiss. Will kissed him back, moaning into Hannibal's mouth. He felt Hannibal slowly glide his hand down along his arm until he met his hand. Hannibal squeezed it again as he led them both away from the music.

Before they could reach the exit, Will and Hannibal passed Frederick and a group of medical students. Hannibal stopped and signaled to Will that he needed to tell Frederick that they were about to leave. Will rolled his eyes but knew Frederick would freak out on Hannibal if they left without saying anything.

God, Frederick is so needy… Will thought to himself.

But before Hannibal could say goodbye, Frederick had already noticed they were heading for the exit as he pushed his way through the group to confront his roommate. He looked super annoyed.

“You guys are leaving already? It’s only seven!” Frederick huffed. He looked downward, arms crossed. His eyes widened when he spotted Hannibal holding Will’s hand.

Will noticed Frederick’s irritation, thinking about how bizarre his behavior was. He told himself he should ask Hannibal about it later.

Aren’t they just friends…?

Hannibal sighed. “We were thinking of taking it easy the rest of the night and watch a movie perhaps.” He nodded while turning to look at Will, who returned the gesture.

He knew Hannibal was lying to get Frederick off their backs. From the way they had interacted while they were dancing, Will had some idea they wouldn’t be watching a movie when they got home.

Frederick waved Hannibal off. “Okay, I’ll come home and watch the movie with you guys. This party is lame anyway.”

Will had to prevent himself from expressing his own annoyance toward Frederick.

Jesus...what a major cock block...

Hannibal sighed again. He squeezed Will’s hand. “Sure, Frederick.”

Will let his friend led him out of the apartment before Frederick could respond. They walked to the edge of the street corner to hail a cab. After glancing behind himself for any sign of Frederick, who was still in the apartment putting his coat on and lingering his goodbyes, Will confronted Hannibal out of pure frustration.

“Hannibal, what the hell?” Will whispered.

Hannibal squeezed his hand again. “It’s okay. We’ll just watch a short movie and then we’ll be alone the rest of the night. I really don’t want to deal with a pissy Frederick tonight.” He waved off the end of his sentence, trying to mask his own annoyance with his roommate.

Will grinned. He didn’t want to have to deal with that either, so he agreed. They had the rest of the night together and he could put up with watching a movie with Frederick for an hour and a half.

Frederick finally caught up with them. “Jesus guys, I thought you left without me!” He practically shouted, marching up to the edge of the street corner in a tizzy.

Frederick spotted a cab crawl up and hailed it down. He motioned for Will to get in first before getting in after, wedging himself in between Will and Hannibal in the middle seat. Will let out an audible sigh as Frederick’s body pushed his body to the limits of the cab’s window.

Frederick, who didn't seem to notice (or care) that he was taking up much of Will's personal space, chatted loudly the rest of the cab ride over, mostly talking to Hannibal as Will slumped in the seat, completely silent and annoyed.

"You might be interested in this, Hannibal. My parents are letting me use their house in the South of France for a few weeks during the summer. We should get a group together." Frederick smirked.

"Maybe, but I was thinking about spending most of the summer back home. Will and I barely get to see each other as it is." Hannibal responded, looking at Will.

Will perked up and smiled faintly at Hannibal. He loved that Hannibal took the time to be with him.

"Well, maybe Will could tag along." Frederick retorted back at Hannibal without really acknowledging Will, who frowned.

God, he's such a fucking asshole...

After arriving at the apartment, Frederick deliberately chose the longest movie they owned, which ended up being a French indie drama with subtitles. Will tried sitting on the couch next to Hannibal, but Frederick swooped in and stuffed himself in between them. He wrapped an arm around both of their shoulders before pulling them inward for a weird half hug.

"This movie is going to be great, you guys. You know French right, Will?" Frederick asked smugly, fully aware that Will didn't know French.

Will rolled his eyes. "You know I don't, Frederick."

Frederick laughed. "Good thing there are subtitles then!"

Will wiggled out from underneath Frederick's arm and looked over at Hannibal. Hannibal appeared unbothered by his roommate's behavior. Will tried to copy the same expression even though he was super exasperated with Frederick.

I honestly don't know how Hannibal puts up with this guy...

Two hours and thirty minutes later, the credits to the movie finally appeared. Will was slumped to the side of the couch, holding his face in his hands, trying not to groan with frustration.

Oh my god...that movie was incredibly boring…

Frederick shot up from the couch as he looked at his watch. "We should watch another; anyone want a drink?" He offered as he headed toward the kitchen.

Hannibal used the opportunity to whisk himself and Will away from Frederick's smothering.

"Actually, Frederick. I'm a little tired." Hannibal said as he stood up from the couch. He looked down at Will, who looked up with a grateful smile.

“Yeah, me too.” Will agreed, taking the hint.

Frederick popped out of the kitchen looking extremely disappointed. “Wait, are you serious? It’s not even ten-thirty!”

Hannibal shrugged. “Will and I wanted to get up early tomorrow.” Will followed suit. He let out a huge fake yawn. Hannibal looked over at him and grinned.

“Fine you guys are super lame.” Frederick huffed, walking swiftly past Hannibal toward his own bedroom, promptly slamming the door soon after entering.

Will smiled back at Hannibal as he followed his friend into his room. Will stretched out on the bed, barely waiting for Hannibal to close the door.

“Okay, what the fuck was that all about?” Will asked, leaning up against the headboard.

Hannibal sighed. He put his hands on his hips before speaking, looking downward at his feet.

“I have to tell you something.” He began.

Will sat up in the bed, waiting to hear the most terrible news ever.

Hannibal looked up at him, hands still on his hips. “I think Frederick is acting odd because he and I went out on a few dates a while back…”

Will gulped. He felt his heart stop. He couldn’t believe that Hannibal had gone out with someone like Frederick. Frederick was probably more uppity than Hannibal and liked the same things that his friend did, but Frederick was incredibly flamboyant and seemingly fake.

Besides, I only find myself attracted to genuinely interesting people. He remembered Hannibal telling him on the first day of his visit.

Hannibal noticed Will’s reaction. He took his time explaining. “It was three times, three times too many. We kissed once and it wasn’t serious...I didn’t think so anyway.”

Will inhaled a deep breath before responding. Of course, Hannibal had gone out with people before their relationship turned physical, but hearing it out loud now, after having sex and experiencing new feelings he had never felt before, Will felt horrible. He couldn’t explain it.

Will felt Hannibal sit down next to him and wrap an arm around his waist. Will wanted to lean into the hug, but he was too upset.

“Will, it didn’t mean anything. If I had known that Frederick was going to act this way, I would have said something earlier. I’m sorry.” Hannibal slowly rubbed his friend’s waist.

Will sighed. He didn’t know why he felt so jealous; maybe the jealousy stemmed from his inexperience? Being with Hannibal romantically would be his first real relationship and he wasn’t sure how to react to his future boyfriend living with someone who he had gone out with in the past.

“How long ago was it…? The dates....” Will finally let out, wringing his hands in his lap.

“We went out last year. I had assumed that he and I had an understanding, however he’s been acting strange ever since I went out with Abel.” Hannibal answered, rolling his eyes at the thought of Frederick being a complete asshole this entire time.

Will just nodded his head. He was still looking down at his hands, nervously fidgeting.

“Are you all right?” Hannibal whispered. He placed a hand on Will’s thigh. Will took his time reciprocating. He knew he needed to chill; it was only one kiss, and it was a while ago...before he started having sex with Hannibal.

Yet, he couldn’t stand the thought of Frederick being around Hannibal after he left...he figured Hannibal wouldn’t do anything...he hoped anyway but thinking about it constantly was a terrible feeling.

Will looked up at Hannibal. “I’m okay...this is...just...all new to me...”

Hannibal cupped his face. “I would never hurt you; you know that right? You mean to much too me.”

Will nodded as he leaned into friend’s body. He knew Hannibal was serious, but part of him still felt horrible knowing that Frederick had kissed his future boyfriend.

He placed a hand on Hannibal’s hand. “I know…”

Hannibal smiled as he leaned in to kiss Will. Will pressed his lips up against Hannibal’s as he pulled them both downward onto the bed. He felt Hannibal starting to rub his crotch, but he couldn’t focus on having sex now. He was still upset about Frederick.

“Is it okay if we just go to bed tonight...I’m actually kind of tired.” Will mumbled, averting his eyes to stare at nothing across the room.

Hannibal cupped his face. “Yes of course. Are you sure you’re all right?” He slowly caressed his friend’s cheek.

Will responded with a slight nod. “Yes, I just want to make sure I don’t oversleep while you’re gone tomorrow morning for your meeting or whatever...” Will trailed off after the word “or”.

Hannibal nodded as he kissed Will’s forehead but didn’t acknowledge the end of Will’s sentence. “You’re right. We should get some sleep.” He got out of the bed to wash up.

Will lingered on top of the sheets, thinking about Hannibal being with Frederick….and Abel...and everyone else he knew Hannibal had gone out with in the past...

“Aw, Will! You’re so adorable.” Beverly exclaimed. Will could tell she thought it was cute how paranoid he was about being about Hannibal.

In hindsight, he was being a little silly about the kiss with Frederick, but he never had really been with anyone before up until that point. Also, Hannibal had been more sexually active than he was when they were younger, mostly due to being older and having more experience in general.

He rolled his eyes but laughed slightly. “Yeah, I know…”

“So, when did Hannibal end up telling you about whatever happened with Abel?” She asked, stretching in her seat before resting her chin on her hand on the desk.

Will looked at her then back at his hands. “Hannibal ended up coming clean to me about Abel after Frederick told me what had happened during their date.”

Beverly made a face. “Ugh…Jesus, Hannibal…”

Will rolled his eyes and nodded his head in agreement.

Beverly braced herself for the drama. “Okay, so what happened then after Hannibal told you about Frederick?”

“Well, the following morning…” Will began…

Chapter End Notes

aw poor sweet young Will, your innocence..I want to preserve it in a bottle

Part Nine

The following morning…

Will woke up early. He looked to the side and noticed that Hannibal was still sleeping in the bed next to him, with his hand wrapped around Will's body.

He thought it was earlier in the morning than Hannibal typically woke up; he figured his friend would be up and about cooking breakfast already and not sleeping in.

Will sat up to look at the bedside clock. It was six in the morning. Hannibal usually woke up around nine on the weekends, which was considered "sleeping in" for him.

Jesus...why did I wake up so early?

He groaned as he fell backwards onto his pillow. He felt Hannibal's body shift, feeling a hand slide its way across his chest again. He turned around to face his friend.

"Good morning." Hannibal whispered; his hair swooped downward into his eyes. He had a sleepy grin on his face.

Will smiled. "Morning." He answered, reaching to sweep the hair out Hannibal's eyes. He let his hand rest on his friend's cheek, lightly caressing his skin.

Suddenly, Will's mind reminded him of last night; a sharp pain radiated through his body. He turned away from Hannibal to look up at the ceiling, exhaling deeply to assuage the pain in his chest.

Hannibal, perceiving Will's hurt, gave his friend a moment to himself. He didn't know what more he could do to ease Will's feelings regarding his past relationships.

He gently rubbed Will's chest. "Will? Are you still upset about last night?"

Will sighed, continuing to stare at nothing on the ceiling. "A little…" He admitted. He felt silly for confessing so, which made him feel even worse about the situation.

He felt Hannibal scoot closer to his body and cup his side. "I understand…I should have told you earlier..." Hannibal lightly kissed Will's neck.

Will closed his eyes. He let Hannibal kiss his body. He tried to relax from the tension between himself and Frederick and the fight with Abel, but it was difficult to do so. All he could think about was Hannibal being with other people.

"Will, I love you." He heard Hannibal whisper through a kiss on his chest.

Will looked down at Hannibal. He swept the hair out of his friend's eyes before answering. He let his hand linger a bit, hesitating to caress Hannibal's cheek.

“Are you being serious?” Will asked. He knew he sounded incredulous. In truth, he needed to confirm Hannibal’s feelings before going any further. He didn’t realize how protective he was of his feelings even with someone he had trusted.

...well, still trusted. Hannibal was his best friend...his closest friend...

Hannibal perked up. “Of course.” He sounded hurt, but continued to hold onto Will’s body, lightly caressing his sides with his thumbs.

Will knew his defensiveness pained his friend, but he was cautious of the way Hannibal had treated people he had dated in the past. No one ever lasted long and the drama with Abel and Frederick made him feel uneasy.

He felt Hannibal stroke his backside. “I know you’re probably hesitant because of the situation with Abel and Frederick and whatever else I’ve mentioned to you in the past, but I truly do love you, Will. I’ve never felt for someone the way I feel for you...”

Will closed his eyes, which began to water from his overwhelming emotions. He tried turning over onto his side to prevent Hannibal from seeing him cry.

He didn’t know why he was being so emotional. No one had really said anything like that to him before and he never felt so close to anyone like he did with Hannibal. Maybe he was being too sensitive about Hannibal’s past relationships.

The way Hannibal had been acting toward him his entire visit felt as if his friend wanted to be with him and no one else.

Maybe I can make this work...I love him too...

Will felt Hannibal cup his face. “Will, are you all right?” He whispered.

Will nodded slowly as he reciprocated his love for his friend. “I-I love you too, Hannibal.”

He tilted forward to kiss Hannibal. Hannibal accepted the kiss by wrapping a hand around Will’s head, lightly rubbing the nape of his neck. They kissed each other for a minute or two before Hannibal gently pulled away.

“We should plan a trip...just the two of us.” He murmured. He rubbed Will with his thumb as he tangled his other hand through his hair.

Will squeezed Hannibal’s waist. “That sounds nice...where would we go? Will was eager to kiss Hannibal again; the way his friend was staring at him was extremely inviting.

“Where would you like to go?” Hannibal asked, now grinning at Will.

Will thought to himself for a moment. He had been to a few places around the world while his family was overseas. But there were a few places he hadn’t been that he had dreamed of visiting someday.

“What about Florence?” Will suggested after a minute of silence.

“Florence? Didn’t expect that.” Hannibal playfully responded.

Will grinned. “Seems like it would be romantic.”

Will’s statement prompted a lingering kiss from Hannibal. Will pressed his lips up against his friend’s as he pulled Hannibal closer to his body. He felt Hannibal gently caress his backside as he moaned into his mouth.

“Romantic, eh?” Hannibal said through the kiss.

Will blushed. He was partly joking, but the other part of him was coming back around to the idea of being in a relationship with Hannibal. He was still conscious of his feelings and the idea of being completely vulnerable with someone was both scary and thrilling. But being with someone who he was super close already helped alleviate some of his concerns.

Yet, he was still on guard for the possibility of getting hurt. If he accepted his feelings toward Hannibal, it would be his first serious relationship and he was terrified of fucking it up. He told himself to play it cool; he needed to prevent his social anxiety from stopping him from experiencing a real relationship with someone he truly cared about.

“Yeah...that’s not weird to say, is it?” He felt his heart thumping out of his chest. Hannibal held onto him, lightly kissing his neck.

Hannibal looked him straight in the eyes as he stroked Will’s face with the side of his thumb. “No, it’s not weird at all…”

“I’m super nervous, Hannibal…” Will let out. He put his hand on Hannibal’s hand stroking his face and stroked him back.

“It’s just me, Will.” Hannibal said softly, staring intensely at Will.

Will looked downward. He blushed from the stare. “I know...could we try it….?”

Hannibal waited. Will knew he wanted him to say it out loud.

He sighed; afraid Hannibal would reject him. “Could we try to be...in a relationship…?

Hannibal took his time before answering. “Of course, baby.” He whispered, leaning inward for a quick kiss.

Will couldn’t control himself. He got on top of Hannibal, grinding his hips downward. Hannibal held on to small of his back and the nape of his neck, moaning slightly from Will humping him.

Will felt his heart flutter. It had been aching from the memory of last night, but now the pain was swept away by the feeling of being with Hannibal.

Will propped himself up to look downward into Hannibal’s eyes. He knew what he wanted to ask for, but suddenly he was at a loss for words.

Hannibal noticed Will was trying to say something to him, so he attempted to soothe his friend's nervousness by gently caressing his neck.

"Yes?" Hannibal whispered after a moment of complete silence from Will.

Will gulped before answering. He lowered his voice, completely embarrassed by what he was about to ask for.

"Will, it's okay. What are you trying to say and/or ask?" Hannibal playfully asked.

Will opened his mouth slightly then closed it. He sighed before speaking again. "Could...I… fuck you...this time?" He averted his eyes as he felt the tips of his ears burning up with nervousness. He wanted to jump off the bed and hide in the bathroom, embarrassed by how silly he was being.

Hannibal simply smiled back as he gently forced Will to look back at him. "Of course, you can. I don't know why you're embarrassed. I asked you before how you like it." Hannibal said coyly, tangling his hand at the tips of Will's hair.

Will felt Hannibal slowly hump his body. He laughed nervously. "Yeah, I guess that's true..."

Hannibal scooted up the bed a bit to prop himself up on his forearms. He waited for Will to tell him what he wanted to do, but his friend was silent.

"So?" He looked at Will and grinned. "How do you like it?"

Will had to prevent himself from gawking. He wasn't sure how to go about fucking Hannibal. He noticed Hannibal was watching him trying to figure out what to do in his head. He gulped as if he were about to answer, but he struggled to decide on what he wanted.

"Would you want me on all fours or on my back, Will?" Hannibal said with a grin.

Will nervously laughed again. "Uh…um…"

Hannibal chuckled, but he was kind. "Do you remember what I did last time?"

Will nodded. Hannibal cupped his face and pulled him downward for a kiss.

"Why don't you try that?" Hannibal whispered in his ear.

Will nodded again as he cleared his throat. "W-where's the lube again...?" He felt his body tremble a bit from a mixture of excitement and nerves.

Hannibal started to get up from the bed. "I can get it."

Will put a hand on his chest before getting out of the bed. "No, it's okay. I can do it..."

Oh my god, I'm so nervous…

Will got out of the bed and walked over toward the dresser or tried to anyway. His legs wobbled a little with each step.

God, get it together, Will. You're just about to fuck your best friend...and... we already...had sex...but what if he doesn't like it!!!????!!!???

"It's in the top drawer." Hannibal said, watching Will take his time walking over to the dresser.

Will nodded back at him as he opened up the drawer. He looked inside, not seeing the lube right off the bat. He had to rummage a bit, disturbing Hannibal's nicely assorted boxer collection as well as his similarly assorted condom collection. Will finally located the lube, which was propped up against the side of the drawer for easy access.

Whoops...oh my god...my hands are trembling...

Will turned around with the lube. He was blushing red. "Sorry, I think I messed up your underwear…and...um…condom...collection…." He stammered.

Hannibal chuckled as he beckoned for Will to join him back in the bed. "Will, it's okay. I'll fix it later."

Will nodded as he sat down on the bed. He stared at the lube, not really knowing where to start. He felt Hannibal rest his chin on his shoulder and wrap both arms around his waist.

"Will, try fucking me with your fingers first." Hannibal whispered in his ear. He placed a hand on Will's crotch, where he felt a semi-hard on, and rubbed gently.

Will moaned, pushing himself into the hand on his cock. He turned around to kiss his friend on the lips. Hannibal placed a hand on the nape his neck as he continued to rub Will's cock through the fabric of his boxers. Will gently pushed Hannibal back onto the bed, still holding onto the lube. Hannibal wiggled out of his boxers while making out Will.

Will straightened up. In that moment, he wasn't sure why he was so nervous before to fuck Hannibal. He couldn't stop his body from reacting; Hannibal laid on the bed, looking up at him, completely naked.

Will snapped open the bottle of lube and slicked one his fingers.

"Try two, Will." Hannibal smirked.

Will nodded, smiling nervously as he slicked another finger with the lube. He positioned himself in front of Hannibal and spread his legs. Hannibal responded by propping himself up with a pillow.

"Oh sorry, I forgot about that." Will stammered, hovering over Hannibal's body, practically salivating from thinking about fucking his friend.

"Will, it's okay. Just relax." Hannibal murmured.

Will nodded as he leaned forward to insert his fingers into Hannibal's ass. He had never fucked anyone with his fingers before, but the sensation was interesting.

Hannibal moaned slightly, closing his eyes, as Will slowly pushed himself inside. The tight ring of muscles around his fingers felt inviting, he immediately imagined himself fucking Hannibal with his cock.

Will leaned forward again, placing a hand on Hannibal's side, beginning to pump his fingers in and out of his friend. He felt Hannibal hold onto his forearm and moan deeply from the action.

Will's heart started to race. Hearing Hannibal moan from him fucking him with just his fingers was more than he could handle. The sexual energy was palpable, and he lost himself in the moment.

"Oh my god...you feel amazing..." Will whispered breathlessly.

Suddenly without notice, Will slicked his hard cock and aligned himself up again with Hannibal's body. He pushed himself inside, moaning loudly upon entry. He felt Hannibal hold onto his backside and moan with him.

Will leaned over to kiss Hannibal as he pumped himself in and out of his ass. He completely lost himself, thinking about Hannibal fucking him for the first time and how it felt to fuck his best friend.

Hannibal held onto the back of his neck, burying his head into the crook of Will's neck. Will felt his body tense; the upper half of his body was so close to Hannibal, that he could feel Hannibal stroking his own cock in time with Will fucking him.

"Oh my god...I think I'm going to come..." Will breathed. Hannibal kissed him back, speeding up the motion of rubbing his cock up against his chest as Will sped up fucking his ass.

Will felt his body explode with ecstasy as he let out a release in Hannibal's ass. Hannibal responded by coming all over Will's chest. Will collapsed on top of Hannibal, breathing heavily. He felt Hannibal hold onto him, lightly kissing his neck.

"Oh my god, that felt so good..." Was all Will could manage. He felt Hannibal nod.

"I agree." He responded breathlessly.

Will laid down next to Hannibal, still breathing heavily. He laid his head on Hannibal's chest. He felt Hannibal slowly rub the top of his head, tangling his hand in his hair.

"Don't you have somewhere to be today?" Will asked smiling, thinking about being so close to his best friend…who was now...he guessed...his boyfriend…

Oh my god...I love him so much...

“I do, but it’s only for an hour. We can hang out after.” Hannibal answered, pulling Will closer to his body.

“I love you, Hannibal.” Will said after a few minutes of silence, shifting his eyes from side to side, afraid that Hannibal wouldn't say it back for some odd reason.

“I love you too, Will.” Hannibal responded, kissing the top of his head.

Part Ten

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry you guys, but Frederick is super annoying...the feels in this chapter...

"Well, *how* adorable is that?" Beverly interjected with a grin after Will told her that he had asked Hannibal to be his boyfriend.

Will sighed. "...it only lasted for a few hours though…"

Beverly nearly fell out of her seat. "Are you kidding me?? You two are *absolutely* ridiculous."

She repositioned herself on the chair, completely taken aback about how fickle Will and Hannibal seemed to be with one another.

No wonder this story is complicated...these fools can't get it together! Beverly silently thought to herself.

She sighed as she regained her composure. "Okay, so what happened next? Let me guess, that's when Frederick said whatever he said to you to make you believe Hannibal wasn't into you." She waved the end of her prediction with a slight of a hand.

Will blushed. He knew at one point in their lives, Hannibal had wanted to be with him...before the argument about Freddie, the drama with Alana, his mother's funeral, and avoiding his friend for almost a year and a half after the visit…he even knew Hannibal wanted to be with him after everything they've been through, but he just couldn't commit...

Hearing out loud from someone else about Hannibal's feelings towards him made the drama more real than he could handle…

He thought about the last time they had sex, again.

...ugh, my chest hurts...

He shook his head slightly to refocus. *No, Hannibal and I aren't right for each other...I want to be his friend...I miss my best friend…*

Will breathed deeply, taking his time before continuing. "...yes, later that morning...Frederick told me about Hannibal's date with Abel…"

Later that morning…

Will had slept in a little longer after Hannibal left for his meeting. He woke up and stretched, thinking of spending the rest of the afternoon with his new boyfriend when he got home. He swung his legs off the bed as he slowly stretched again, yawning with a huge grin.

Omg...I can't believe I'm dating Hannibal now...

Will licked his lips then rubbed his stomach before rising from the bed. He figured he should eat something to hold himself over until he had lunch with Hannibal later.

Will walked out of the bedroom toward the kitchen. He rummaged through the cabinets, looking for a bowl to pour cereal and milk. He picked out cereal Hannibal had bought that was the least healthy and plopped down in a chair at the kitchen table.

After a minute or two, Frederick walked into the kitchen, wearing his workout clothes. He was humming to himself, earbuds in his ears, techno music blasting. Will cringed. He thought about Hannibal kissing Frederick, but then calmed himself when he thought about Hannibal wanting to be with him and not anyone else, especially Frederick.

Frederick, through his dance music haze, noticed Will sitting at the table. He turned his music off once he reached the cabinet.

"Well, good morning, Will. Hope you two had a *nice* night." Frederick smirked. Will tried to prevent himself from rolling his eyes, but they half rolled instead.

"Morning, Frederick." He managed in between bites.

Frederick searched for a bowl to fill with cereal. He was silent as he poured the cereal into the bowl and joined Will at the table, sitting across from him.

"The mornings when Hannibal is busy are the worst. Maybe I should learn to cook breakfast for the both of us." Frederick said through a smile as he shoveled cereal into his mouth.

Will knew he was talking about making breakfast for himself and Hannibal. He was annoyed that Frederick was trying to challenge him on his relationship with his boyfriend.

"Make yourself useful." Will responded with a sly smirk.

Frederick huffed as he continued eating.

After a few minutes of silent chewing, Will noticed that Frederick was eyeing him from across the table. He exhaled a breath of annoyance after finishing a bite of his cereal.

"What, Frederick?" Will asked in exasperation.

Frederick chuckled before speaking. "Nothing...it's just that Hannibal always seems to do whatever he can to get his way."

Will straightened up at the assertion, but he tried not to give into Frederick's provocation.

"Oh?"

Frederick shuffled in his chair. "Did he happen to tell you that he and I went out on a few dates?"

Will rolled his eyes before getting up from the table to place his cereal bowl in the sink. "Yes, he did." He turned around swiftly to exit the kitchen. The proximity to Frederick for even a brief few minutes was all he could handle for the day.

But before exiting, he turned around. Will observed Frederick silently smirking to himself.

"He told me that the two of you went out on a few dates, kissed once, and that it wasn't serious. Especially from his end." Will added.

Will watched Frederick get up from the table and walk toward the sink. Frederick turned around and perched himself up against the counter.

"Okay then, did he tell you about Abel?"

Will stood his ground before answering. "I know Hannibal went out on one date with Abel. Surprisingly, we don't keep secrets from one another, Frederick."

Frederick laughed faintly as he crossed his arms. He looked at his feet before looking back up at Will. "Is that so? Well then, did he tell you that he *fucked* Abel literally the night before you flew in?"

Will froze in place. He hadn't expected to hear this bombshell.

He knew Frederick was beside himself, shocking him with that new bit of information. He felt a dull aching feeling in his chest.

Frederick laughed at the sight of Will trying to comprehend Hannibal's actions. "I guess you and Hannibal *don't* tell each other everything." Frederick pushed himself away from the counter, strutted across the kitchen like a cocky peacock and brushed past Will who was standing in the door opening.

Will felt Frederick knock into his shoulder a bit; he felt the urge to punch this asshole, but he stopped himself. The pain in his heart from the night before returned, but this time thinking about Hannibal being with Abel was the source.

Will leaned up against the door frame. He wasn't sure what to do.

...what...?

He slowly walked back to Hannibal's bedroom and sat on the bed, almost falling over in the process.

He felt like crying, but he couldn't. His chest hurt as he clenched the edge of the bed, bunching up the blankets with his fists.

Why wouldn't Hannibal tell me that he had sex with Abel?

Will buried his face in his hands. He felt used.

I hope you think I'm interesting. Will thought back to the conversation he had had with Hannibal about Abel the first day of his visit.

Of course, I do.

Will fell back onto the bed, staring up at the ceiling.

...but do you really…? He said to himself, questioning everything he thought he knew about his boyfriend.

Ugh… Will clenched his chest. The word "boyfriend" made him feel terrible.

He thought he could be completely vulnerable with Hannibal without getting his feelings hurt, but to him, it didn't feel that way anymore. He figured Hannibal would have said something by now, especially after the run in Will had with Abel that night at the party.

Will grabbed one of the pillows next to his head and pressed it against his face. He started to sob into the pillow as he slowly turned onto his side. He hugged the pillow up against his body and quietly cried to himself.

About an hour later...

Hannibal opened the door to the apartment and walked in; there was no sign of Frederick or Will. He smiled to himself thinking of Will sleeping in.

His sleeping habits are absolutely adorable...despite it being late...

He walked toward his bedroom and opened the door. Hannibal saw Will lying on his side on top of the sheets. His facial expression immediately changed as he began to sense that there was something bothering his boyfriend.

Hannibal sat on the bed and rubbed Will's arm. He could hear him sniffling.

"Will are you all right?" Hannibal asked softly.

"Was it here?" Will murmured as he buried his face further into the pillow.

"What, Will? I can't hear you." Hannibal leaned down toward Will's body.

Will turned around slowly to face Hannibal. He took his time; he was beside himself with his emotions. His cheeks were stained from crying all morning.

“Did you fuck Abel in your bed?” He asked steadily.

Hannibal sighed heavily. He lowered his head before answering.

“I’m going to kill Frederick.” He muttered underneath his breath.

He took his time, looking directly at Will. “It was over at his place…”

Will, not really acknowledging Hannibal’s statement, shot up in the bed. “Fuck you, Hannibal. I can’t believe you didn’t tell me!” His voice raised; he was close to shouting.

Hannibal tried to place a hand on Will’s thigh, but he wiggled away.

“I was going to tell you today, Will.” Hannibal responded, keeping calm.

Will shook his head as he hopped out of the bed. “Hannibal, he tried fighting me at that party and it took you *this* long to tell me?” Will could feel the tips of his ears burning.

Hannibal stood up. “You’re right, in retrospect, I should have told you that night, but I didn’t think we would start having sex.”

Will sighed. He and Hannibal had argued before since they were so close, but this was definitely gearing up to be their worst fight yet. He hated whenever he got so upset about something, but then Hannibal would remain calm.

“Hannibal, we made out the night before...we already started getting physical.” Will retorted.

Hannibal put his hands on his hips. “I guess I figured we’ve been close for a while that the kiss was more fun than anything else...I thought you liked the girl you were seeing, honestly.” He answered.

...shit, I forgot I was seeing someone before I started sleeping with Hannibal...

Will rubbed his forehead to refocus. He could only deal with one issue at a time.

“Okay, what about after the first time we had sex then, Hannibal?”

Hannibal shifted from one leg to another. “Would you’ve *truly* wanted me to bring up that I had slept with someone else after we had sex, and that it was right before you had arrived?”

Will huffed. He knew Hannibal was right, but he was still very upset. He turned around away from the bed and crossed his arms. He felt his eyes starting to water. He had never felt like this for anyone before and the thought of Hannibal being with someone else was more than he could bear.

He felt a hand squeeze his shoulder. Will leaned back into Hannibal as the squeeze on his shoulder became a hug from behind.

Will gulped and closed his eyes.

“Will, I thought about telling you last night, but you got so upset about Frederick, that I thought it would be best to wait until you calmed down.” Hannibal whispered.

Will felt Hannibal pull him closer with both arms.

I guess you and Hannibal don’t tell each other everything...

“I don’t think I can do this…” Will said after a few moments of silence.

Will thought Hannibal wanted to be with him and no one else…the way his friend had acted toward him...suggesting the trip they should go on together...the way he had made him feel the first time they were intimate…

It had taken Will so long to come to the realization that he had wanted to be with Hannibal, too. He never really felt like himself with anyone except for when he was with Hannibal.

...I’m so sorry, Hannibal…I just can’t do this...

But they lived in two different states for the time being and could only see each other during the holidays, unless they planned a trip in between. Will couldn’t handle the thought of being away from Hannibal and thinking about the possibility of him being with someone else.

“What do you mean?” Hannibal said, betraying a sense of hurt in his voice.

Will sighed. He turned around to face Hannibal. “I don’t think I can be in a long-distance relationship...especially when it’s one of my first serious relationships…”

He looked down. “My chest hurts every time I think about Frederick or Abel...they’ll be here, and I won’t be…”

Hannibal looked down at him. “Will, I wouldn’t betray you…I don’t know why you would think I would…”

Will felt his eyes tear up with ache. He let Hannibal tilt his head upward with one hand. He tried averting his eyes away from Hannibal, but their closeness prevented him from doing such. He settled on crying softly with his eyes closed so he couldn’t look at his friend.

He felt Hannibal lean forward and kiss him on his forehead. “Will, I’m so sorry for making you upset, that wasn’t my intention…”

Will sobbed loudly this time, struggling to hold himself up; he had never felt so hurt before.

It wasn’t as if he and Hannibal had been in a relationship and his boyfriend cheated on him...it was more like Will having a difficult time trying to trust Hannibal...their relationship was so different now and he couldn’t handle it.

“Hannibal…I can’t…I’m sorry...” Will looked downward at his feet. Droplets of tears hit his feet and ran to the hardwood floor.

He let Hannibal pull him close.

“I-I...need...to focus on…my classes…” Will said through tears. He thought he could use school as a more affirmative excuse to mask his hurt feelings.

Will pulled away a bit and wiped his eyes, sniffling a little. “I still want to be friends…”

Both he and Hannibal were silent for what felt like hours.

“Why wouldn’t we be friends?” Hannibal asked softly.

Will finally looked up at him, choking back more tears. “I…I just...assumed you...would be…upset with me…” He let out.

Hannibal smiled faintly. He cautiously placed a hand on Will’s cheek and gently caressed it. “Will, I know I can’t force you to do anything, but I’ll always be there for you.”

Will nodded back.

He thought about how complicated their relationship was now…but let’s just say that twenty-year old Will had no idea how the rest of his relationship with Hannibal will end up playing out...

I need him, but I need to protect myself. Will thought. *That’s the only way I’ll get through this...*

Hannibal sat down on the bed and looked up at Will. He smiled and Will blushed.

Dammit... Will cursed to himself.

Hannibal took his hand and playfully swung it around a bit, attempting to diffuse the situation. “Do you still want to walk around today? Or do you prefer staying home? I’m flexible, of course.” Hannibal asked, cautious of his friend’s emotional state.

Will appreciated the change in conversation. He needed to focus on seeing Hannibal as just his best friend again.

He wiped his face again with his free hand. “Could we hang out here? Is that okay? I’ve been dragging you around all over the place...” He smiled slightly, half sincere, half forced to conceal his hurt.

Hannibal stood up again from the bed and gave him a hug. Will leaned inward and hugged him back.

“Of course, Will.”

That day, Hannibal and Will rewatched the first season of their favorite show, *The Hunt*, ordered in and spent the whole night watching movies about serial killers. They laughed and poked fun at each other the whole day and night...spending most of it in Hannibal’s bed.

Outwardly, it appeared as if everything was back to normal, but Will couldn’t dull the aching feeling of not being with his best friend the way he had wanted to be...

Part Eleven

Chapter Notes

> Just another thank you note to those who have been giving me great feedback so far on this story. Thank you so much, and I'm glad people are enjoying this :)
>
> --lady_slice

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Later that night...

Will couldn't sleep the night before his flight back to school. He squirmed in Hannibal's bed, staring up at the ceiling, not sure if he wanted to cry or shout. He turned around onto his stomach to clench his pillow up against his face. He knew Hannibal was probably awake, feeling him constantly and violently shifting in the bed.

Ugh...I can't sleep!!!

Will sighed loudly and closed his eyes. He felt a hand slide across his back as Hannibal pulled him close. Even after discussing (or mostly crying) about not being ready for a relationship with his best friend, Will still appreciated being close to him. They were still friends...well that's what he hoped anyway.

"I can't sleep, I'm sorry." Will apologized. He buried his face into the pillow.

Hannibal figured it was probably best not to bring up any relationship talk, knowing that Will was already enduring enough emotional pain by not being able to sleep. He knew his friend suffered from insomnia, and it probably didn't help that their relationship took a turn Will was struggling to come to grips with.

Hannibal squeezed him tight up against his body for a hug. "It's all right, Will. Do you want water or anything else to help you sleep?" He asked, whispering softly.

Will couldn't turn around to look at his friend. He was too upset and afraid he would try kissing Hannibal or do something else needy or clingy. He really wanted to be with Hannibal, but he couldn't stand not seeing him everyday...possibly calling and/or texting his boyfriend every hour because he missed him and didn't fully trust him.

"No, I'm okay." Will murmured through the fabric of the pillow.

Hannibal pulled him closer, which Will didn't think was possible; they were so close to each other on the bed, as close as they could be without fucking each other.

Hannibal exhaled. “Okay, just let me know if you need anything then.”

Will nodded and tried falling back to sleep. Once his mind began to drift off into the recesses of sleepiness, he dreamt about being with Hannibal far into future, receiving a surprise marriage proposal from his boyfriend…

Will murmured to himself in his sleep, reacting to the dream sequence.

“I love you so much, Hannibal…”

Either Hannibal didn’t hear him or chose not to make an issue out of it. He only tightened his grasp around his friend as they both fell into a deep sleep.

The following morning...

In the morning, Hannibal helped Will pack up his things. Frederick was nowhere in sight, which relieved Will. He wouldn’t be able to handle himself having to say goodbye to Hannibal with Frederick smirking in his face.

Hannibal made them breakfast before they took the subway to the air train to get to the airport. The entire time over, they barely spoke besides talking about future meetups and what both might be doing for the holidays. After a while, Will noticed that he was leaning into Hannibal’s body like he had been after the first time they had sex.

Will jumped back a bit when he finally realized what he was doing, but Hannibal didn’t seem to mind. He only smiled at his friend and continued talking about the possibility of coming home for the holidays this year.

Once they reached the airport, Hannibal walked with Will up to the ticketing kiosk. They both lingered a bit, not really looking at each other.

Will was looking downward at his bag, shifting from side to side. “I guess I’ll see you during the next break…” He started.

Hannibal nodded. “Of course.”

Will took his time picking up his bag. “Bye, Hannibal.” He swiftly turned around to get in line. However, he thought about how silly he was being not really say goodbye to his best friend.

Will turned around and ran back to give Hannibal a hug. He couldn’t control his emotions; he hated that he couldn’t be calm about how he felt about Hannibal.

He pressed himself up against Hannibal’s body as he took the time to revel in his friend’s scent. He really wanted to be with his friend, but he knew his own paranoia would only drive

him crazy with them trying to attempt a long-distance relationship.

Will felt Hannibal pull him in closer and rest his head next to his. Will's eyes watered; he had to fight his emotions from rendering him a wreck in front of Hannibal. He felt Hannibal trying to soothe him by lightly caressing his neck. Will settled; he hugged Hannibal tighter.

"I'm sorry, Hannibal." Will whispered.

"Will, it's okay. I'm not upset." Hannibal whispered back.

Will appreciated that his friend understood his hesitancy toward a potential relationship. It was too much for him to handle right now, and he rather stay close friends with Hannibal than ruin it with a relationship that could possibly not work out.

Yet, part of Will wished that he could be with his best friend.

...this is so hard...

He felt Hannibal gently pull away. "Text me when you get back to your dorm, okay?"

Will nodded back. "Okay."

Hannibal gave him another tight hug before letting him go.

"I should get going…" Will managed.

Will picked up his bag off the floor. He turned around slowly to get back in line at the ticketing counter before turning around to wave goodbye to Hannibal. Hannibal smiled and waved back. Will blushed slightly as he watched Hannibal smile back at him.

Ugh...I hope he didn't see me…

Hours later, after waiting forever for his bag to roll out of the baggage claim chute, and struggling to catch a cab outside of the airport, Will finally made it back to his dorm. He dropped his bag next to his desk and fell over on his bed from exhaustion.

He turned over to lay on his stomach and buried his head into the pillow.

Ugh...this past week...

After a while, Will pulled out his phone to look through his messages. He saw a few texts from the girl he was seeing before his visit with Hannibal. He had been ignoring her the entire week.

...ugh, fuck…

He quickly texted her back, explaining that he barely had service in New York.

Hopefully she'll buy that… Will thought.

Will waited before texting Hannibal that he was finally back in his dorm. His eyes started to water again; he missed Hannibal already.

Will: I'm back, my plane got in late and I had the hardest time trying to get home

Will laid his phone on his chest as he waited for Hannibal to text him back. After a second or two, his phone buzzed with a message from his friend.

Hannibal: Good :) I was afraid you got lost

Will couldn't help but laugh. One of the things Hannibal was really good at was making him smile, even if when their relationship felt strained at times, like now.

Will: i'm not that bad :p

Hannibal: ur pretty bad, but it's cute

Will waited before sending a reply. Their conversation wasn't anything different compared to before the visit, but now post-visit, anything Hannibal said melted Will's heart, even though he fought himself to squash those feelings.

Will: Glad you think so :p

Will: i'm going to bed now i'll call you tomorrow night

Hannibal: k goodnight will :)

Will: goodnight hannibal :)

Will never did call Hannibal back the following night; he was afraid of hearing his friend's voice again and possibly crying on the phone. He lied about getting together with the girl he was sort of seeing; he actually ended up breaking up with her the night he got back to his dorm.

He promised he would call Hannibal later in the week...

Soon, their daily conversations turned into a few texts during the week and maybe a phone call every two weeks. Eventually, Will couldn't stand the possibility of Hannibal telling him that he was seeing someone, so he stopped contacting his friend all together.

Will couldn't bear the thought of knowing Hannibal was with someone else, so he thought it would be best to stay in the dark.

Beverly sat back in her chair, eyes wide. "Wow." Was all she could manage.

Will sighed in response. “Yeah, I know…”

Beverly waited before speaking again. “You guys were friends when I met you, so something happened in between that visit and now…”

Will nodded. He shuffled around a bit, thinking of the best thing to say about what had happened between that visit and now…he couldn’t tell her about the “fuck buddies” situation yet...he knew she would give him a hard time.

He settled on just telling her that they eventually made up and decided to move in together...he would save the other stories for later, possibly after he got a chance to talk to Molly about Hannibal coming to visit.

“We eventually made up about a year and a half later before my graduation.” Will started.

“I did see him from time to time before then, but we never really talked like we used to.” Will laughed nervously.

“Actually, we ended up moving in together when I was at Columbia...”

Beverly’s eyes widened a little as soon as Will mentioned that they had moved in together. He could tell she was suspicious.

Will waved his hands about nervously. “Ugh, Beverly. It was fine for the most part…”

“The most part?” She repeated.

“Remember when I said I tried to make Hannibal jealous? That was when we were living together in New York.” Will added slowly.

Beverly squinted her eyes at him, as if she were trying to search for the whole truth. Will noticed and tried to look away, but it was no use; he could feel her shooting daggers of vicious inquiry at his face.

Will sighed. “Okay...okay...we had sex *once* while were living together…it was after my mother’s funeral…” He was of course lying about the two of them only have sex once, but he was telling the truth about the one time after the funeral.

“Will!! I knew it. Why else would you try to make Hannibal jealous...and the two of you are living together...” She rolled her eyes at their ridiculousness.

Will’s face turned red again at the thought of Hannibal lying in a hospital bed after his run in with Will’s hook up. He and Beverly both sat in silence for a minute or two, trying to figure out the best thing to add to the conversation to make it less awkward.

“Did you ever think of the possibility of being with Hannibal again…you know...since the visit?” She asked.

Will sighed. He was relieved that she didn’t try to pry more into the details of their roommate situation back in New York, but he was also emotional stressed from revisiting his feelings

towards Hannibal.

“I’m afraid….” He began.

Beverly looked sympathetic. “What are you afraid of, Will?”

He sighed again before explaining. “I’m afraid that if we don’t ‘work out’ as an *actual* couple, I’ll never see him again...we’ve had arguments in the past, but we’ve managed to reconcile...but I feel that if I fully commit, I’ll lose him…it’s just better if we stay friends...” He had exhaled deeply when he motioned with air quotes around the words “work out”.

“But are you two really friends, or is it something more?” Beverly asked cautiously.

Will sat for a moment in thought. He knew that his relationship with Hannibal was more complicated than a friendship, but he was trying to get over that now. He was with someone else.

...but was he with someone else so he could forget Hannibal…?

Will longed to see him again…

No, he’s just my best friend...

“Hannibal and I are just friends, Beverly, nothing more.” Will concluded.

Beverly looked at him as if she didn’t believe him, but she figured she would give him a break considering the fact that she didn’t know everything about their relationship…well not yet, anyway.

“You really need to talk to Molly. It’s not fair to have Hannibal around when she doesn’t know about your relationship, let alone who he is.”

Will waited before answering. “I promise I’ll talk to her...”

“Hannibal too. It’s also not fair to have him around and not know that you’re seeing someone.”

Will sighed again as he swiveled in his chair. “Yeah, I know…” He looked directly at Beverly. “I promise we’re only friends now. I really don’t think there’s the possibility of anything else...”

Beverly got up from her seat. “That may be true, but you still need to be honest.”

Will slowly nodded.

“I’m going to get going. Call me Wednesday, okay? We should get dinner.” Will walked Beverly out after giving her a hug.

“Thank you for taking the time to hear my bullshit, Bev.” Will said through the hug.

Beverly smiled. “I’m always here to listen to you, even if it is bullshit. But *very* interesting bullshit, I might add.”

He smiled back at her before closing the door. He took his time walking back to his desk.

He sat back down at the desk, staring at nothing. The rest of the day, he tried to keep his mind occupied with work...and what to say to Molly...

Later that night…

As soon as Will unlocked the door to his apartment, he was greeted by his other best friend, his dog Winston. Winston, as soon as he heard the door click, ran from the kitchen and jumped on Will. Will laughed back as he tried to pet Winston while trying not to fall over.

“Hey, buddy.” Greeted Will with a grin.

He crouched down next to Winston and vigorously rubbed his head. Winston barked back a few times, excited that his best friend was home finally.

Will walked over to the kitchen counter to grab Winston’s leash and a plastic bag. He took Winston out around the block a few times before Winston finally relieved himself. The entire walk, all Will could think about was being with Hannibal for the first time and how much he missed him. He kept cursing to himself about bringing up the memories when he needed to focus on Molly... but his mind wouldn’t listen to him.

Goddammit....how am I going to get through this?

We’re just friends now… Will lied to himself to force himself to stop thinking about how sexy Hannibal was…or possibly still is...

After warming up some leftovers, Will went to his bedroom to call it a night. Winston followed closely behind. He jumped up on the bed in his usual spot and snuggled down for the night.

Will laid down in his bed. He sent a quick text to Molly, responding to her dinner date plans for tomorrow evening. He propped himself up against the headboard and stared up at the ceiling, thinking about the events of the day.

Suddenly, Will jumped out of the bed. He walked over to where he usually kept his work bag and pulled out his laptop. He returned to the bed as he turned the computer on.

Will scrolled through his email messages back to the one Hannibal had sent last.

> “Ha, it is a little last minute, but that sounds like something I could swing. How would Thursday, the 17th, through Tuesday, the 22nd? The conference begins the evening of

the 18th and ends the afternoon of the 20th."

Will's fingers hovered over the keyboard as he struggled to reconcile his emotions. He thought back to the first time he was intimate with Hannibal and how amazing it had felt. He also thought back to their most recent fight and how he had realized after that that he missed Hannibal greatly.

Will waited before typing out another message. He knew what he was doing, but he wanted to see Hannibal again. He needed to see Hannibal again. Will thought that he could survive the weekend being around Hannibal; he missed his friend being near, physically present in his life.

That's how he was able to convince himself that nothing would go wrong the weekend Hannibal came to visit.

"We're just friends now…we're just friends now…" Will repeated to himself over and over out loud. The mantra got so loud to a point that Winston perked up to see if there was something wrong with his best friend.

Will noticed and laughed at himself before rubbing Winston's head, who looked as concerned as a dog could be by his owner's behavior.

"I'm okay...I promise…" Will explained.

He would wait to tell Molly. They had just started dating and bringing up the issue with Hannibal would only make things more complicated. He told himself he would wait until after Hannibal's visit to tell her about their past relationship. Besides, he and Hannibal are only friends now…especially after their falling out. Well, that's what Will wished for anyway.

He started to type on the keyboard.

"That sounds great! Send me your flight itinerary when you get the chance."

Will waited before finishing his reply. His heart began to thump in anticipation of seeing Hannibal again.

"Can't wait to see you. I miss you, too. - Will"

END OF VOLUME ONE

Chapter End Notes

Next, Volume Two. :)

side note: I'm planning to make the next three volumes longer...I won't say how long because I want to keep people in suspense :p

thanks for reading !

Vol. Two - Part Twelve

The following night...

“I’m glad we decided to stay in and cook dinner. It’s more romantic *and* cheap.” Molly grinned at Will as she stirred the sauce she had put together from a homemade spaghetti recipe. Will was trying to open a bottle of wine, but the cork wouldn’t budge.

After struggling with the wine opener for a minute or two, he ended up snapping the cork in half, not really paying attention to what Molly was saying. Of course, he was thinking about how he was going to deal with both his girlfriend and best friend this coming weekend.

“Shit!” Will nearly shouted, huffing in frustration. The bottle of wine fell over on the kitchen counter, but he managed to rescue it before it rolled off and hit the floor.

Molly chuckled. “It’s okay. There has to be some way to get the broken piece out.” She laid down the wooden spoon she was using to stir the sauce on a small plate and walked over to Will to help him with the broken cork.

Will sighed, running a hand through his hair. He suddenly remembered a trick Hannibal had showed him a while ago to retrieve a broken cork from a wine bottle. He quickly ran over to the one of the cabinets and grabbed a strainer.

“Here, I actually know what to do.” He grinned, as he pulled the strainer out of the cabinet before running back over to Molly and the bottle of wine.

Molly stepped to the side as she watched Will used a clean towel to push the broken cork into the bottle. He placed the strainer over the opening of a decanter and poured the wine through the strainer.

“Well, that was impressive. Where did *you* learn to do such a party trick?” Molly smirked.

Will smiled back. He immediately remembered; however, the night Hannibal had taught him the trick. It was the same night back in New York when his friend had surprised him with a nice dinner after finishing his first year of grad school.

Wow, can I steal this for the future? Will had been caught up in the romantic nature of the dinner and was planning to kiss Hannibal when the opportunity presented itself.

Of course, just remember who taught you…

And, as was previously mentioned, that was the same night Hannibal and Will ended up fucking on their kitchen floor after Will complimented Hannibal on whatever he was wearing and kissed him shortly after.

...and then they decided to be “friends with benefits” and all of that goodness...you know the gist, but not the details yet...

“Uh, something I learned while I was at Columbia…” Will didn’t lie; it was only a half lie….a half lie dripping in awkwardness and secrecy, and thoughts of how sexy Hannibal looked that night...how great it felt to have sex with his best friend again...

...*fuck*... Will thought to himself, before quickly pushing the memory to far reaches of his mind as best as he could.

Molly smiled at him before returning to her task of looking after the sauce. Will poured out two glasses of wine for them both. He had to wait a bit to keep his hands from trembling, settling on his decision on how to deal with the mess he had created for himself.

He had decided, before Molly came over for dinner, that he was going to just mention that Hannibal was visiting next weekend. He was still going to wait to tell her about their past after Hannibal left, to avoid any awkward situations.

He figured that would be the best solution to avoid a similar Freddie/Hannibal debacle from over a year before.

...Jesus...was it really that long ago…?

Will knew Beverly would give him more than a hard time about it, but he thought he could handle the situation by being partly honest…(or whatever that means)...to prevent Molly and/or Hannibal from getting possibly upset with either each other and/or him.

Will, dizzy from the mind gymnastics in his head, re-focused his attention on telling Molly that Hannibal was coming to visit.

Ugh I feel like I’m going crazy over this…

But before he could do so, Winston scurried over to see what they were cooking. He had been sleeping in the bedroom, but his tiny dog dreams had been interrupted by the delicious smells emanating from the kitchen. Molly saw him before he could start begging and gave him a dog treat after getting him to sit like a good boy.

“There you go, Winston. Good boy.” She praised Winston for his obedience as she crouched down to rub his head. Winston barked back a “thank you for the treat and pat.” Will smiled before he brought up Hannibal.

“So, a friend of mine is planning to visit next weekend…” He began.

He was trying not to sound suspicious; it was normal to have a friend come and visit for a few days...well if Will and Hannibal had a “normal,” not so intense, non-sexual relationship...a relationship not teeming with underlying unaddressed feelings of attraction and love…

Molly looked over at him, surprised. “Oh! That sounds like fun! Is this a New York friend or a “home” friend?”

Will nodded. “Well, actually, both. He’s my best friend…we’ve known each other since we were kids…”

Molly stopped what she was doing. Will could tell she was confused. “Oh, I had just assumed Beverly was your closest friend.” She offered.

Will shook his head. “She is...well I mean...she’s probably my second best friend…” He laughed nervously. “Ugh, I sound like I’m in high school...”

Molly laughed back. “Well, tell me about your friend. Why haven’t you talked about him?” She asked as she continued stirring the sauce.

“We had a fight over a year ago and he moved back to New York…we were roommates for a while here...while also in New York...but that was before we moved together to Baltimore...” Will said cautiously. He figured Molly wouldn’t try to ask for details about the fight because she typically wasn’t nosy.

“Oh! Well, that’s no good. I’m glad you guys are talking again.” She smiled.

Molly covered the sauce before looking back at Will. “So, what does your best friend do? How long is he staying? I feel like I’m getting to know more about you.” She was still smiling, blissfully unaware of the complicity of her boyfriend’s relationship with his closest friend.

Will prevented himself from sighing. It was true, Molly would get to know only a little bit more about him...but he would only tell her basic details about Hannibal, leaving everything else out, you know, like the how many times they fucked and what not.

“His name is Hannibal Lecter and he’s a doctor at Mount Sinai in New York. I met him back when my dad was in the army reserves…” Will started before propping himself up against the kitchen counter.

“We used to be super close, but not so much anymore…” He concluded.

Will felt himself getting upset slightly from admitting that out loud. He felt Molly wrap a hand around his waist and pull him in for a hug.

“Well, that’s the great thing about the people closest to us, we always seem to pick up where we left off, even if we haven’t seen a good friend in years.”

Will smiled at the advice but grimaced inwardly. Molly really had no idea how close he was with Hannibal.

His mind wandered, back to about after a year or so after his visit to New York while he was still in college, when he finally had to confront Hannibal after avoiding contacting his friend…

Flashback to about eleven years ago...

Will had been actively avoiding Hannibal for about a year and a half after his visit to New York. Hannibal would come home for holidays and breaks around the same time Will was home, but he never put in the effort to reach out to his friend. He would come up with some sort of an excuse to be busy with family or catching up on schoolwork.

When their families did get together for dinner, Will would give Hannibal the cold shoulder by not engaging him directly. It was a little awkward considering both of their immediate families were quite small, but Will managed to talk to everyone else except for Hannibal.

One night during winter break about eleven years ago, Hannibal had approached Will while their parents left to gawk at Hannibal's dad's new car. The boys were left alone in the parlor room of the Lecter household, not looking at or speaking to one another.

Will eventually acknowledged Hannibal's presence, but tried to look preoccupied with something on his phone. Hannibal sat in a chair across from Will, looking through a random book he had picked up from a nearby bookshelf.

The room was engulfed in total awkward silence, until Hannibal spoke up.

"Feels as if I haven't really spoken to you in a while." Hannibal smirked, looking up from the book.

Will had to prevent himself from smiling back at Hannibal. He both hated and loved that Hannibal could so easily ease tension.

Will shuffled a bit on the couch he was sitting on. He really didn't want to talk about avoiding Hannibal or the visit; he was afraid of getting upset.

I should have left to go look at the car...or maybe home? Ugh, I missed my chance…

Will sighed as he looked down at his hands. "I-I'm sorry. I've been busier than usual..." He lied.

Actually, I really just miss you a lot and I don't want to hear about you dating someone else…

Hannibal took his time before responding. "That's understandable. I know you're graduating in a few months…" He began, purposely trailing off.

Will only nodded. He felt his emotions wrecking his sensibilities and the fact that Hannibal had remembered when he was graduating even though they had stopped talking to each other didn't help.

They sat in silence for a few more minutes.

"So, did you hear back about grad school?" Hannibal asked, intently staring at Will.

Will continued to stare down at his hands. He knew Hannibal was watching him fidget with his phone. He cleared his throat before answering.

"I should hear back next month…" He started.

Hannibal tilted his head slightly. He was attempting to get his friend to open up to him more without pushing him away. Will took the hint.

"...I applied to Columbia…" Will added. He remembered the conversation he had had with Hannibal about the two of them possibly living together if Will got into school in New York.

"Well, I hope you get in. It would be great to have you around." Hannibal smiled.

Will finally looked up and almost lost it. Hannibal noticed how upset Will was and walked over to the couch his friend was sitting on to sit next to him. He hesitated before wrapping an arm around Will's shoulders. Will didn't back away, in fact, he leaned in closer to Hannibal before he started crying.

Hannibal drew him closer to his body and hugged him tightly. Will sobbed a bit into Hannibal's chest before moving his head away slightly to speak up.

"I really miss talking to you, Hannibal...I miss being around you…" He admitted.

Hannibal hugged him even tighter. "I miss you too, Will."

Will held onto Hannibal a little longer as he continued to whimper into his friend's shirt. He felt silly for being so emotional about Hannibal and the visit from over a year ago, but he couldn't control himself. He did miss his best friend…a lot, actually...

After a minute or two of Hannibal cradling Will in his arms on the couch in the parlor, Hannibal lightly caressed the top of Will's head.

"Would you like to catch up on past episodes of *The Hunt*? I'm not sure if you've been keeping up—"

"Yes!" Will jerked around in Hannibal's arms, excited before calming down, given the situation, "…I haven't been watching it since...my visit…" He answered and ended slowly as he thought back to that week in New York.

Will had stopped watching *The Hunt* because he had been missing Hannibal too much and anything that reminded him of his friend was avoided. Will was also surprised that Hannibal had stopped watching it as well.

Hannibal placed a hand on the back of his neck and smiled. "Well, we should catch up together."

"So, what do you guys have planned for the weekend?" Molly asked as she let go of Will and returned to overseeing the sauce. Winston finished his treat before rubbing his head up against Will's leg.

Will shook himself slightly out of a memory haze before he answered. “Well, besides having to subject him to Kade’s inane form of social torture—”

“The department party you’re hosting next weekend?” Molly smirked. She was fully aware of Will’s “tense” relationship with his department’s chair.

Will nodded, “Yeah, well besides that, not too much.” He hadn’t really thought about what he and Hannibal would do when his friend wasn’t at the medical conference. Actually, he actively tried to *not* think about it, afraid that his mind would wander…

All last night, after he sent his last email to Hannibal, and all the entire day, Will had been thinking about the best way to prevent himself from temptation to indulge in his feelings for Hannibal during his friend’s visit. He thought maybe he should stay with Molly and let Hannibal stay at his place, alone.

“Also, I was thinking maybe, if you didn’t mind, I could stay with you while he visits...you know to give him space….” Will offered. He thought Molly would think it was weird that he didn’t want to be near Hannibal at night, but she didn’t seem suspicious.

Molly shook her head yes. “Of course, I don’t mind, Will.”

“I figured he would want to have alone time during the days of his conference…also it would give us alone time…” Will slowly offered, knowing that Molly would appreciate the proposal.

Will and Molly had spent mostly the weekends together without really spending the night. They had just started dating and both he and Molly had talked about taking it slow.

However, Will was really more concerned about giving into his lingering feelings if he were alone with Hannibal in his apartment at night, possibly getting caught up in needed conversation and missed closeness.

He sighed to himself when Molly turned away from him to make sure the sauce was okay.

I really don’t know how I’m going to survive this mess.

“Well, it’s kind of a big step…for us.” Molly said slowly. She walked back over to where he was standing and gave him a tight hug.

“Maybe we all could go out for a nice dinner one of the nights!” She excitedly offered.

Will scoffed a bit to himself, thinking that Hannibal would prefer preparing a dinner himself, but Molly didn’t know about his best friend’s culinary skills.

“That’s a good idea, but we’ll have trouble trying to convince Hannibal. He’s actually a pretty good chef and whenever I do get him to go out to eat, he insistently critiques the food.” Will smirked, thinking about the few times he and Hannibal went out for dinner; his friend would spend most of the night criticizing the food, and rarely praising a few dishes.

Molly looked up at him and smiled. “Oh, that’s great! But yeah, maybe we can convince him to take the night off. It would be nice to have a nice meal with you, me, him, and possibly Beverly!” She added.

“A great meal between friends.” Molly concluded with a huge smile.

Will forced a smile. “Yes, of course. We can do that.” Of course, he was more concerned about keeping Molly and Hannibal separate from each other most of the weekend, but he couldn’t say no to the dinner plan without raising suspicions.

...*fuck*...

Part Thirteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will followed Hannibal into his bedroom. He cautiously sat on the edge of the bed, looking nervously around the room, as if that were the first time he had ever been in his best friend's bedroom back home.

God...I'm so nervous...I wonder if he noticed…?

Hannibal's room looked more or less the same before he had moved to New York for med school. It was as ornate as the rest of the Lecter's house, and Hannibal was especially meticulous with his things.

Will glanced over toward the opposite end of the room; the closet was slightly opened and Will could see all of Hannibal's clothes hanging in a nicely ordered and color sorted fashion. He thought he had caught a glimpse of an article of clothing he had once previously owned, but figured Hannibal wouldn't be holding onto any of his clothes…

*Or maybe…? I think I did leave a shirt at his place in New York...*Will thought to himself. He decided not to press the issue in order to avoid an unpleasant conversation concerning his visit to New York.

The room felt a little dark; Hannibal's mother favored a dark and deep color scheme that perforated throughout the entire household. The scheme was practically in every corner of the house, except in the oversized kitchen and the common bathrooms, which were lighter in color, yet still a little eerie to Will whenever he used their bathrooms or fetched a snack from the kitchen.

The only natural lighting in Hannibal's room came from a giant double hung replacement window above his bed. Right now, since it was evening and Hannibal had chosen to leave the overhead light off, the room was only lit by a desk lamp and an "artisty" looking floor lamp that Will had trouble trying to figure out what exactly it was supposed to be. It looked like an abstract alien sculpture, well to Will anyway, who only barely cared about his best friend's art appreciation.

Jesus that lamp is ugly… He thought to himself, squinting his eyes at the shape of the lamp.

After a minute or two, his eyes wandered past the lamp to his friend's bookshelf. The bookshelf was full of texts focused on medicine, the culinary arts, serial killers, art history, and geography. Hannibal also kept a few of his old sketchbooks wedged between the larger textbooks and the outer edges of the bookshelf itself.

Suddenly, in view on the shelf between a book on human anatomy and French desserts, Will noticed a framed photograph of himself and Hannibal at their families' shared cabin from a few summers ago. Both boys were smiling and half hugging each other.

Will averted his eyes while thinking about the memory. He hadn't wanted to take the photo at the time, for reasons he really couldn't remember, but Hannibal had grabbed him and pulled him close. He had said something funny to Will to get him to smile and Will's mother took the photo quickly before he could wiggle away.

That was a great summer… he reminisced.

"You still have photos of us at the cabin?" Will smirked, trying to ease his awkwardness.

Hannibal was over by his desk unplugging his laptop from the power cord. He sat down next to Will on the bed and proceeded to find a link on the internet to the past season of *The Hunt*.

Hannibal smiled. Will blushed. "Of course. I think I might take that one back with me to New York, actually." Hannibal offered, pointing to the photo of the two Will was just looking at before.

Will blushed again. He had taken his photos of himself and Hannibal back home so he wouldn't be reminded of his friend every single day while he was at school.

I guess I could take my photos of us back to my dorm these last few months…

"Why don't you make yourself more comfortable?" Hannibal said through a now faint smile, as he pulled up the show on the screen.

Will nodded before scooting up the bed toward the headboard. He rested his head up against his forearms waiting for Hannibal to join him.

Will's heart thumped a little, considering this was the first time, in a while, he was in the same bed as his friend since New York. Lately, even though he had been trying to actively not think about Hannibal, Will would often fantasize about lying with him in a bed, joking and cuddling with each other like they had during his visit. Will had to shake himself a bit out the fantasy and focus on rebuilding his friendship with his best friend.

He wasn't sure where to place his hands when Hannibal finally laid down next him, but after Hannibal settled into the bed, Will settled on keeping his hands behind his head.

"Scoot over a little more." Hannibal said playfully.

Will relaxed and flashed Hannibal a shy cute smile. "Can't help that you need more space than me."

Hannibal scooted his body up against Will's in response to his retort. Will kept smiling, using his body to push back on Hannibal's. He ended up shifting his body further down the bed so that his head was near his friend's chest. Hannibal balanced the laptop on the lower half of his body, while his leaned his head up against the headboard.

I guess this isn't as weird as I thought it would be… Will thought to himself, looking at the laptop then slightly up at Hannibal.

Will scooted closer toward Hannibal. He felt Hannibal inch a little closer toward him as well. Will exhaled as he let his body turn and face his friend. He slowly placed a hand on Hannibal's chest, which Hannibal took and held onto.

They both looked at each other and smiled before Hannibal hit the play button.

A few days later...

Phew...I'm only a few minutes late...

Will had plans to meet Beverly at a pub down the street from his apartment. He was running a little late; a result of waiting to the last minute to grade some final papers and take Winston out for a bit, who had been waiting all morning to go out and walk around the neighborhood.

He jogged into the entry of the pub but was too focused on thinking about Hannibal to look for Beverly, even though she was sitting right in front of him.

"Will! In front, nerd!" She shouted, motioning for him to sit next to her.

Will laughed as she playfully yanked on his arm to sit next to her. "You're *such* a dork." She smirked.

He grinned as he sat on a barstool next to Beverly. She handed him a food menu before looking back at her own.

"Talk to Molly yet?" Beverly casually asked as she scanned her menu.

Will froze. He hadn't told Beverly about his plan to tell Molly everything after Hannibal left. He thought about lying to her to keep her from freaking out, but he knew that if he kept Beverly in the dark, the fallout later from the dishonesty would be worse than a tongue lashing now. Also, he couldn't lie to his friend; Beverly had been there for him ever since he broke up Freddie after his car accident.

He sighed. "I just told her about him…"

Beverly side eyed him. "And that you two had sex before." She added, with a hint of authority in her voice.

Will rolled his eyes. "...I didn't get a chance to get to that..."

Beverly's eyes widened as Will quickly tried to explain his reasoning. "We were making dinner and I told her the basic details about our friendship: how we know each other...the fight—I did bring up the fight, Beverly, so don't look at me like that—I told her that we lived together, and he had moved back to New York. I also suggested staying at her place to give

Hannibal space—really Beverly, don't look at me like that!" Will huffed, exasperated from his own bullshit regarding the situation.

"Are you serious, Will? I don't even know *where* to begin with this." Beverly threw her hands up, also completely frustrated with Will's bullshit.

"Well, I guess...at least you told her about your best friend…" She rolled her eyes.

Will nodded in relief that Beverly didn't seem too upset about him only being a little honest with his girlfriend. Her demeanor quickly changed, however, when Beverly took note of his relieved expression.

"Oh no, Will. You are *not* off the hook. You suggested that Hannibal use your place like some second-rate Airbnb?" She was majorly side eying her friend.

"Hey, my place isn't second rate." Will was trying to get her to laugh, but she wasn't having it.

"Will! You only 'suggested' that Hannibal stay at your place while you stayed with Molly because you knew you would be tempted to mess around with your friend!" Beverly groaned with irritation and rolled her eyes, using sassy-laden air quotations around the word "suggested".

"Well, then it's good that I removed myself from the situation, right?" Will nervously grinned, holding his hands up in a "why not?" pose.

Beverly slapped her forehead. "You're ridiculous, Will. Are you trying to cause drama? Do you want to humiliate Molly and possibly push Hannibal away?"

Will lowered his hands, looked down at his lap and fidgeted. "Of course, not…"

"Then what the hell are you doing then?" Beverly managed to ask calmly.

"I'm trying to—"

"Have your cake *and* eat it too?" Beverly interjected.

Will sighed. "Bev, come on. Let me explain."

She crossed her arms and sighed in disbelief. "Well, this should be good."

Will inhaled then exhaled slowly. "The... thing with Hannibal is more complicated than that visit while he was in med school...I'm trying to preserve everyone's feelings in the matter..."

He looked up at the ceiling before looking back at Beverly. She looked pissed.

"I'm going to tell her after Hannibal leaves." He admitted.

"Will! Are you *fucking* kidding me?" Beverly nearly shouted. She looked around first before swearing at her friend, lowering her voice after the word "fucking".

Will placed a hand on her arm and stared her down. He appreciated how concerned she was, but the fight from a year ago concerning Hannibal and his ex-girlfriend was looming in his thoughts. He didn't want a repeat, so he figured he would extricate himself from possible temptation with Hannibal and talk to Molly in private.

"Beverly, I've done this before, and it ended horribly. You were there for the tail end of it so you only kind of know what I'm dealing with." Will explained calmly.

Beverly stayed quiet as she reluctantly listened to her friend.

"My ex-girlfriend forced me to choose between Hannibal and herself when I told her that we had sex in the past...I ended up choosing her...and Hannibal, understandably, got super upset…well as upset as someone like Hannibal could be...and we literally stopped talking."

Will moved his hand back to his thigh. "Please just let me do it my way, okay? And I already told you, Hannibal and I are just friends now…." He half lied to her and himself.

"I only really suggested the 'second-rate Airbnb' thing to just give him some space since we had that huge unresolved fight." Will then completely lied.

He really wanted to separate himself because of the possibility of fooling around with his friend, but of course, he wasn't about to tell Beverly that she was possibly right about his true underlying intentions.

We're only just friends now...

Beverly finally looked at her friend with compassion. He exhaled a sigh of relief.

"I'm sorry, Will. I didn't know that Freddie forced you to choose between Hannibal and her…" Beverly said slowly. Will could tell she was genuinely sorry concerning his predicament with Hannibal.

"It's all right, Beverly. I haven't told you everything about Hannibal…" Will began.

He looked at his friend, who smiled back at him. He sensed that she was willing to listen to the rest of his story.

"Let's order something to eat." She said flagging the bartender down. The bartender acknowledged Beverly as he took his time sauntering over toward their direction. They both ordered sandwiches with fries.

"Okay," Beverly started as she placed the food menu down, waiting for the bartender to walk out of earshot of their conversation, "what happened after you stopped talking to Hannibal? I'm assuming you two were fine until that huge fight."

Will sighed. He looked at her before staring off at nothing over the bar counter. "Well, we stopped talking for about a year and a half. I had been avoiding Hannibal the entire time...whenever our families got together for the holidays, I would just ignore him. Until one night, he asked me about grad school…"

He looked at Beverly. He almost started to tear up. He thought back to the memory of them lying in Hannibal's bed, watching the latest episodes of *The Hunt* they had missed when they stopped contacting each other.

"I told him about Columbia, and we told each other that we missed...talking to one another…" Will added. He thought about how emotional he had become when Hannibal gave him a hug that night before they went to his room.

He had missed being close to his friend. More than a year of no contact with Hannibal had weighed heavy on his heart and he would often fantasize about being with Hannibal; either a friendly hug would cross his mind, or a dirty sex scene with him and Hannibal switching positions in bed.

"Basically, we silently buried the issue from New York...well I thought we had...and watched this show we both were crazy about…" Will said softly.

"Oh, what show was that?" Beverly curiously asked.

Will smirked thinking about *The Hunt*. The show had only lasted for three seasons due to low ratings, but it was by far both his and Hannibal's favorite show. They would often rewatch the show during the weekends they were both free while they were roommates.

"It's called *The Hunt*. It's about a charismatic serial killer living in a fictionalized version of New York City." Will explained.

Will grinned. He immediately refocused his attention to how close he and Hannibal were that night.

"I ended up falling asleep in his bed and decided to stay over that night." Will added.

He could still remember how great it felt to finally be close to Hannibal once again; almost going back to the way they had been before they started having sex.

"The next day, I needed to get a present for my mother at the mall. I had asked Hannibal to go with me...and we ended up running into...some drama…" Will concluded. He could feel Beverly's growing intrigue.

"It turned out to be a huge deal, but it started out with a guy Hannibal was tutoring…we ended up running into him at the mall..." Will trailed off.

Chapter End Notes

thanks again for reading ! :D

Part Fourteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next day...

Hannibal and Will had been walking around the downtown shopping center together, mostly catching up on life and trying to figure out what to get Will's mother for the holidays. To Will, it felt as if everything was sort of back to normal between the two; they weren't weird with each other...well to a certain point, however...

Will was still on guard concerning his feelings and bubbling emotions. He only felt this way just in case Hannibal ended up hurting him again...somehow...

Yet, he told himself, on the way to the mall, that he would try to give his best friend the benefit of the doubt. The word "try" being the operative word in Will's case.

Will stopped in front of a storefront littered with purses. "What if I get her a new purse or something like that?" He wondered out loud, bobbing his head up and down, trying to figure out which purse would be the best gift.

Hannibal stood by next to him, quizzically studying the selection of purses. "Do you know what her favorite color is? Which type of purse she would like to use and/or need?"

Will looked at Hannibal as if he were speaking in an alien language, incapable of deciphering.

"Umm…uh…" He stammered. He thought maybe he knew which color was his mother's favorite, but he wasn't sure.

Hannibal, noticing that his friend was struggling to answer his very sensible questions when it came to buying someone a gift, decided to poke fun at Will.

"Why don't you get her something easy, like a gift card?" He chuckled.

Will smirked as he placed his hands on hips. "I want to get her something more personal, Hannibal."

Although…now that I think about it…I don't know the first thing about "fashion bags"... Will thought to himself. (Author aside: Fashion bag? What the hell is a fashion bag, Will…?)

Hannibal smirked back. "Okay, why don't you get her a gift card from her favorite store then."

Will gawked and then hurriedly looked around the mall. He also didn't know where his mother typically liked to shop. He sighed, and Hannibal laughed, fully aware that his friend didn't know which store was his mother's favorite.

Will brushed past Hannibal and playfully bumped into him. He felt Hannibal caress his arm lightly. “Okay, so I don’t know which store is her favorite...let’s just pick a nice one.” Will admitted.

They headed in the direction of the nicer retail shops. Will was walking close to Hannibal, close enough to hold his hand. He thought about doing so as a joke, but he felt that the two of them were still raw from their “failed” attempt at a relationship from over a year ago. So, he kept his hands to himself, fidgeting a bit as he walked.

“Don’t you need to buy gifts?” Will slyly asked Hannibal.

Hannibal looked at him before looking straight ahead. “I bought all of my gifts a month early. I actually bought yours *first*.” He said coyly.

Will had to prevent himself from blushing. *Dammit, Hannibal.*

“Uh ...well...I have almost all of my gifts…” Will admitted.

He had debated on whether he should buy Hannibal a give this year since they hadn’t been talking. He had given him a small gift last year, but he had already had it picked out before the visit to New York.

The gift had been a sketchbook Hannibal used during his rotations at the Mount Sinai, but Will didn’t know that…you know since he stopped talking to his best friend for over a year...

I gotta buy Hannibal something now…

Hannibal smirked at him. “That’s good. You’re usually rushing at the last minute for gifts!” He said back at Will as he walked up swiftly to another storefront. Will grinned at the poke and followed his friend.

“I’m not *that* bad.” Will rolled his eyes, even though he knew Hannibal was right.

“You are, but it’s cute.”

Hannibal turned to look at him, stepping closer to place a hand on his arm. Will smiled nervously, anticipating the move and their burgeoning closeness; a closeness that confused Will and made him think about kissing his friend or running away again, until, suddenly, he heard someone shouting Hannibal’s name.

“Hannibal!”

Will watched his friend avert his eyes. Will looked behind himself and saw a pudgy looking guy running toward them.

“Hannibal! Hannibal!”

The guy caught up with them, but then bent over from exhaustion. Will and Hannibal watched him huff for air, struggling to catch his breath from sprinting across the mall.

Will looked at Hannibal. He had no idea who the guy was, but figured it was probably another one of Hannibal's uppity friends.

"Franklyn?" Hannibal finally said, betraying that he was a little confused as to why Franklyn just ran across the mall to meet up with him. He stepped past Will to closely observe Franklyn's behavior.

"Are you all right, Franklyn?" Hannibal asked, rolling his eyes slightly as Franklyn continued to make a scene about how out of breath he was.

Finally, Franklyn straightened himself up with the help of deep exhalation. He put his hands on his hips to steady himself.

"Hannibal! When did you get in? I thought you would *at least* text me…you know...you can also call me...I would have...answered...." Franklyn breathed out the few breaths of air he struggled to grasp for after scolding Hannibal for not contacting him.

Will shot Hannibal an aggravated look, thinking this was possibly another Abel situation due to this guy's seemingly clingy behavior and Hannibal's past relationship history.

Ugh, did he fuck this guy too? Why is he acting so clingy?

Hannibal looked down at his shoes then back up at Franklyn before crossing his arms. He knew Will was staring at him.

"I've been home for about a day or so. Sorry, I've been spending time with my family." Hannibal responded calmly.

Even through his friend's crafted stoic nature, Will could tell that Hannibal was annoyed with this Franklyn guy.

Franklyn looked at Will then back at Hannibal, pointing at Will. "Then who's *this*?" He asked rudely, not fully acknowledging Will.

Will was taken aback by Franklyn's frank rudeness. He stepped in front of Hannibal to introduce himself before his friend could.

"My name's Will Graham. I'm Hannibal's best friend." He stated, placing his hands on his hips, staring Franklyn down with intent.

Hannibal placed a hand on his shoulder to ease the tensed situation. "Franklyn, Will. Will, this is Franklyn. I tutored Franklyn in his calculus classes whenever I had some time during breaks from school last year."

Will squinted his eyes. He couldn't remember Hannibal ever mentioning anything about someone named Franklyn and they usually spent most of their time together whenever their breaks overlapped. He figured Franklyn didn't mean that much to Hannibal, otherwise he would have already known who this was. But then he remembered that they hadn't been speaking to each other for more than a year...

Nevertheless, Will was annoyed that he didn't know who Franklyn was and Hannibal didn't feel the need to update him.

Typical Hannibal... Will silently thought to himself. *Does he really not care about anyone?*

Franklyn straightened his tie out. "Well, we're also blooming friends, too, Hannibal."

Will had to prevent himself from grimacing. This guy was creeping him out.

Hannibal sighed. "Well, of course...to *some* degree…"

"This guy is creeping me the *fuck* out." Beverly injected. She was sitting staring at Will, sipping on her water, completely engrossed in her friend's story.

"Like, what is his deal?" She continued, scooting closer.

Will rolled his eyes. "Honestly, just someone who was obsessed with Hannibal…Hannibal manages to attract all types of people, like moths to a flame." He sighed.

Even years later after his relationship with Hannibal turned physical, Will never got used to people tripping over themselves to even speak to Hannibal. His friend would occasionally oblige some and while ignoring others, but it always bothered Will. He knew it had something to do with his lingering feelings toward his best friend. He had to suppress those feelings everyday just to function.

"Hannibal was also nicer to this guy than he really needed to be. He ended up telling me later that that was a big mistake, since it turned into more drama with Franklyn's friend, Tobias." Will explained.

"Tobias? Oh wow, this sounds like high school drama." Beverly smirked.

Will rolled his eyes again, remembering the physical fight he and Hannibal got into with Franklyn and Tobias.

"Ugh, Beverly, you have no idea…"

Franklyn's face couldn't prevent itself from contorting into "complete shock" in response to Hannibal's hesitancy in accepting their "blooming" friendship. Will noticed the subtly of the exchange and it immediately annoyed him. He really didn't want to find out if Hannibal had also dated this guy in the past.

God, I really don't want to hear about anyone Hannibal's been with at the moment… Will angrily thought to himself.

"How's your holiday coming along, Franklyn?" Hannibal asked, attempting to diffuse the awkwardness pouring out of this conversation.

Franklyn perked up at the thought of Hannibal finally appearing interested in his life. He puffed out his chest with pride, gearing up to tell the two about all of the hoity toity activities he managed to get to in the past few days.

"Besides getting a chance to see *Rigoletto* finally—that's a famous opera." Franklyn said to Will, as if he were an idiot.

Will furrowed his brow at the provocation. "I'm aware, thank you." He retorted. He felt Hannibal caressed his back to calm him down.

"Oh well, have you seen it? Anyway, starting a cheese making class this week," Franklyn waved Will off to look at Hannibal, "you should try it out, Hannibal. I know you're a fellow turophile…" He looked back at Will, "...that's a lover of—"

"*Cheese*. Did I not mention that I'm *best* friends with Hannibal Lecter?" Will rolled his eyes as he interrupted Franklyn, who was looking down at him as if he were a child who was interrupting a mature conversation between adults.

Hannibal faintly smirked at Will's sassiness, but he tugged a bit on his friend's jacket to ease up a bit on Franklyn.

This guy is a piece of work...he might be worse than Frederick…which I didn't think was possible... Will sighed to himself.

Hannibal spoke up finally. "Sounds great, maybe if Will and I get a free moment from our families, since we barely see them as it is..." He offered looking partly at Will. Will grinned faintly before looking back over at Franklyn who seemed irritated that Hannibal had included him in future cheese making plans.

Franklyn rolled his eyes. "I guess I could take Tobias with me to the class, so we'll be an even group." He looked over intently at Hannibal.

"He *did* mention you the other day, Hannibal, so I'm sure he'll be amenable to the idea."

Hannibal didn't say anything immediately when Franklyn brought up his friend Tobias. Will noticed before looking back at Franklyn again.

"*Sure*. Sounds like a date." Hannibal answered with a coy grin after a moment or two.

Hannibal placed a hand on Will's shoulder to indicate to him that he wanted to leave the conservation. Will could feel through the touch that there was something bothering Hannibal about Franklyn and his friend.

Who is this Tobias guy…? Why is Hannibal being weird about it?

“Well, we should get going, Franklyn. You know, holiday shopping and what not.” Hannibal started to turn away from Franklyn, taking Will with him by the shoulder. Will let his friend guide his body; he couldn’t wait for them to leave this unpleasant conversation.

Franklyn looked extremely disappointed. He stepped forward to get them to stay a little longer, but Hannibal waved him off.

“Oh, oh, really?” Franklyn started.

“Yes, sorry!”

“Oh okay, I’ll call you later, Hannibal!” Franklyn said excitedly. Hannibal waved at him again, forcing a fake smile.

Will stared at Hannibal as they walked away from Franklyn. He knew his friend knew he was staring at him, attempting to avoid explanation.

“Hannibal, what the fuck was that about?” Will finally asked, “who is this Tobias guy?”

Hannibal sighed once they reached the escalator. Will knew Hannibal was trying to come up with some lame excuse to keep him from becoming paranoid about god-knows-what in relation to Franklyn and his mysterious friend, Tobias. Will noticed and became immediately annoyed with his friend constantly treating him with kiddy gloves.

“Hannibal, just tell me.” Will huffed as he rolled his eyes.

“It was one time.” Hannibal admitted after looking away from his friend then back at him directly in the eyes, knowing that Will already knew that he was referring to a one-night stand with Franklyn’s friend, Tobias.

Will jerked backwards, even though he already knew what Hannibal was referring to. “*Wow*, Hannibal.” He shoved his way passed Hannibal and walked down the escalator.

Will marched his way toward the exit of the building. He thought about calling his father to pick him up instead of riding home with his Hannibal. He really couldn’t stand how promiscuous his friend appeared to be.

God, I can’t fucking believe him…

“Will!” He heard Hannibal shouting after him. He finally caught up with Will before he could call for a ride home.

“Will—” Hannibal tried to place a gentle hand on Will’s arm, but he wiggled out from underneath the grasp.

“I really don’t want to hear it Hannibal. I—”

Will’s cell phone started to ring, cutting him off before becoming further upset with his friend. His mother was calling him. He held up a finger to Hannibal’s face to stop him from explaining his way out of his bullshit.

“Hello? Hi—” Will turned away from Hannibal, “yeah sure, I can go for you. Could you just text me the list?”

Will looked back at Hannibal and blushed. “Yeah, I love you too, mom.” He ended the call.

“I need to go to the grocery store.” Will rolled his eyes.

Hannibal attempted to walk ahead of him. “Okay, I can take you.” He answered, fishing for the car keys in his pocket.

Will stepped in front of him. “Hannibal, it’s okay...I’ll just have my dad pick me up…”

Hannibal placed a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it. “Will, I’m sorry for not telling you about Tobias, but I really didn’t think it would become an issue,” he looked Will in the eyes, “let me take you to the store.”

Will sighed before nodding yes. He knew Hannibal was trying, but he was still annoyed. However, it would probably be better to have Hannibal take him to the grocery store then having to wait for his father to pick him up at the mall.

Will walked ahead of Hannibal. “Fine.”

He figured he could have Hannibal drive him to the store and then ditch his friend later, so he could avoid Hannibal trying to assuage his feelings like usual with whatever bullshit he usually came up with to dig himself out of messy situations.

He had to clench his fists as he got into Hannibal’s car to prevent himself from getting overly emotional. He really didn’t want to hear about Hannibal fucking around with anyone else; this was he why had avoided him in the first place.

God...his bullshit… Will thought angrily to himself as he leaned up against the window of Hannibal’s car, holding his face in his hand.

Hannibal noticed that his friend was upset but tried not to push him. “Will, are you all right?”

“I’m *fine*, Hannibal. Just drive to the store, please.”

Chapter End Notes

Silly Franklyn, Will's Hannibal's best friend, even though they're being stupid with each other at the moment. :p

Part Fifteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

About an hour later...

Will and Hannibal had been scurrying around the local grocery store, picking up items on Will's mother's shopping list in a frenzy fashion. Will was still pissed with Hannibal and Hannibal was attempting to make the situation as lighthearted as possible by being his usual charming self. However, the subtlety of the charm was completely lost on his best friend who would do anything to disappear himself from the situation.

"Two percent or whole?" Hannibal asked Will, as he reached inside the refrigerated section of the dairy aisle for a jug of milk.

Will sighed. He was leaning on the grocery cart, anxious to get out of the store as quickly as possible so he could get away from Hannibal.

"I *don't* know, Hannibal." He huffed back, rolling the cart back and forth with the arch of his foot.

"Well, what does it say on the list?" Hannibal asked, remaining calm.

Will achingly pulled his mother's list out of the pocket of his jacket, as if the task were the most difficult thing for him to do.

"It doesn't say."

Hannibal gentle took the list away from him. "You should call her to confirm which one she wants." He advised his friend with a kind smile after thoroughly scanning the list, as if he were searching for hints.

Will rolled his eyes at Hannibal's smile, turning away to face the other side of the aisle.

That's not going to work on me this time, jerk.

"Why? It's just milk." Will moaned. He slowly turned his head to look back at Hannibal.

Hannibal's smile turned into a coy grin which prompted a curt frown from Will. "If she's baking, she most likely needs whole, but if it's for drinking, she'll probably want two percent." Hannibal patiently explained.

Will stared at his friend. He knew some things related to cooking because both his mother and Hannibal were great chefs, but he wasn't in on the specifics. Nor did he really care about whether they bought the right milk for baking brownies or chugging a quick drink for breakfast.

Oh my god, does it really matter?

"It matters. Baked goods are more moist with whole milk." Hannibal responded as if he could read Will's mind.

Will gawked. *Did he just read my mind?* He sighed. *He just knows me way too well… dammit...*

Will rolled his eyes again as he took out his phone to call his mother about the milk situation. He frowned at Hannibal as he waited for the other line to pick up. Hannibal continued to smile at him as he patiently waited for his friend's mother's response.

Hannibal smiled. "Aren't you glad we called to verify?"

Will shoved past Hannibal to grab a jug of whole and two percent milk. "*Whatever*, Hannibal."

Will pushed the cart away down the aisle after dropping the milk jugs into the cart, not really waiting for his friend to catch up with him.

Hannibal took Will's abruptness as a sign that his friend was still upset about Tobias. He galloped swiftly to walk next to Will.

"Will, you can talk to me, you know." He tried to reassure his friend as gently as possible.

Will looked away from him. "I don't want to, so leave me alone."

Will sped up as he walked with the cart. He spun around the refrigerated aisle to make a beeline toward the checkout lanes. However, he felt Hannibal keeping up with him closely behind. Will really didn't want to hear about Hannibal fucking some random guy after they had slept together.

You fuck me, then go out and fuck random people...Jesus, Hannibal.

In all honesty, he figured Hannibal had gone out with people after they had had sex, but the point truly was that he didn't want to hear about it. Will hadn't really seen anyone after sleeping with Hannibal and he hated that he couldn't move on so easily like his friend seemingly could.

He felt Hannibal squeeze his shoulder once they made it to the cashier line. "Will, I know you're upset about Tobias…" He began.

Will pulled away from Hannibal as gracefully as he could without making a scene. "Hannibal, I really don't care about who you're *fucking* right now, okay? But I don't want to talk about it." He looked away to drive his point home.

God, just leave me the fuck alone, Hannibal!

Hannibal waited a minute or so before speaking up, looking intently at his friend.

Whenever Hannibal did get a chance to speak to his friend the last year and half since the visit, he was cautious not to bring up anything about dating. He actually hadn't really dated anyone since sleeping with Will, because, as you already know, he was in love with his best friend and didn't want to be with anyone else.

He knew that Will was probably sensitive about the current state of their relationship, so he made a point not to bring up anything related to his few romantic dalliances since the first time they had sex in order not to upset his friend.

"Hannibal, *please* stop staring at me." Will demanded, annoyed that Hannibal was attempting to gauge his feelings. He figured that if his best friend had really cared about him, he wouldn't have gone out and fucked random people.

Hannibal continued to look at Will for a moment longer, fully aware that his friend had lied when he said that he didn't care about who he was seeing.

He wasn't sure whether Will had felt the same way toward him after the visit, but the way Will had treated him the few months after, constantly ignoring his calls and messages, Hannibal had figured Will had some lingering feelings toward him he was struggling to reconcile.

Hannibal took the initiative to ease Will's feelings, even though his friend was telling him not to in so many words.

"It didn't mean anything." Hannibal explained out loud. He wasn't sure if Will would respond, but he had said what he said out loud so his friend could hear it no matter what.

Will felt his body tense. He clenched his fists again, angry that Hannibal was still talking about being with this guy. He wasn't sure whether he was more upset that Hannibal wouldn't drop it or that having sex with this guy didn't mean anything. The second thought fueled Will's perception of his friend as an uncaring Lothario who fucked everything in sight.

His imagination took off with thoughts of Hannibal using this guy for sex. Will, from time to time, would convince himself that Hannibal only had used him for sex also, since his friend seemed to move on so quickly after he visited had New York. The thought was infrequent, but at times it would consume his emotions, much like now.

Will finally shot Hannibal an angry look. "Yeah, I *bet* it didn't."

Suddenly, Will was interrupted with a stream of text messages. He jerked off the stool a bit, thinking that the texts were possibly from Hannibal.

"What? Is it Hannibal?" Beverly asked, also startled by the interruption in the story, lowering her voice as if Hannibal were to appear at any moment out of thin air.

Will shook his head. They were messages from the texting thread he was on with Brian Zeller and Jimmy Price, fellow colleagues in the psychology department at Johns Hopkins. They had texted him soon after everyone in the department found out that he was hosting the next faculty party; giving him “advice” on how he should organize his “soirée”.

“No, it’s this stupid texting thread Brian and Jimmy added me to…” Will sighed. He also remembered that there was a possibility Hannibal didn’t have his phone number anymore...

I wonder if Hannibal still has my phone number….? I should email it to him when I get the chance...

“Oh…” Beverly rolled her eyes and grinned, fully aware of the trouble Brian and Jimmy were capable of getting into.

Brian: will do you have a place for a bar?

Jimmy: brian thinks he’s a mixologist now

Brian: at least i can put together a good rum and coke !

Jimmy: great bc we’re going to need all of the rum and cokes in the world to deal with kade :p

Jimmy: even tho im sure your rum and cokes aren’t that great

Brian: better than yours, loser!

Jimmy: are you really arguing about who’s better at rum and cokes??

Brian: you brought it up, dork

While reading the argument between Jimmy and Brian over drinks, Will used one hand to rubbed the nape of his neck.

“They’re arguing about drinks.”

“Oh, wow. They’re out of control. BUT I do appreciate their willingness to ensure that we all have a semi-great time at Kade’s enforced ‘social’ gatherings.” Beverly commented with a grin. She was secretly glad that she didn’t have to host this faculty party at her place or deal with Brian and Jimmy possibly messing up her kitchen with their drink concoctions.

Will grinned a little. Both Jimmy and Brian were a little annoying in their own, however, irritating when paired together. Yet, they both knew how to have a good time in the most boring of situations.

Will sent a quick text back so he get back to the story.

Will: i have some counter space you guys can use for mixing drinks

Jimmy: just a counter??? Ive roughed it before so that’ll work :p

Brian: I bet you have ;)

Jimmy: whats that supposed to mean brian??

Brian: you know what I'm talking about ;) ;) ;)

Jimmy: no i don't please enlighten me, asshole

Brian: ha! No i think i'll let you figure it out on your own

Jimmy: you're impossible, im surprised anyone gives you the time of day

Will sighed as he turned off his phone. He figured he could deal with the party details later in the week, considering the party was next weekend and he was already swamped with work before the break…oh and trying to deal with both his girlfriend and best friend being in the same room together.

I'll deal with the party details later...wait...Hannibal could possibly help…

Will shook his head. He needed to keep Hannibal at a metaphorical arm's length next weekend and planning a party together would only be distracting. Besides, Beverly had already offered to help.

"Why are you shaking your head?" Beverly asked, after finishing a bite of her sandwich.

Will realized that his body language was mirroring the active conversation he was having with himself in his head.

"Oh, just Jimmy and Brian." Will lied.

He placed his hands on his knees before returning to his story. "Hannibal kept trying to get me to talk to him while we were getting ready to leave the store, but I wasn't having it…"

"Yeah, I *bet* it didn't." Will swiftly turned his head away, as the line to the cashier moved down the aisle.

Hannibal had expected a reaction such as the one given to him by his friend in response to the Tobias thing, but he didn't think Will would get this upset. He let Will walk ahead of him, and he lingered behind; staring intently at his best friend's backside, reveling in memories of them lying close to each other after having sex.

He had to prevent himself from reaching to caress his friend's back like he had done when Will went head-to-head with Franklyn back in the mall.

Their familiar closeness had seemed almost repaired after they spent the night together and half the day at the shopping center. However, everything was dashed to pieces once Franklyn opened his mouth about Tobias, alluding to their one-night stand.

Will could feel Hannibal staring at him from behind. Yet, he couldn't turn around. His emotions were over taking his body and he was afraid he would either start crying or shouting or both at his best friend in the middle of the fucking grocery store.

"I've hardly been with anyone else, Will." He heard Hannibal say behind him. The admission didn't help, it actually angered him even more. Who was this Tobias guy and what hold did he have over his friend that Hannibal had no time for anyone else but for him?

"I said I don't care." Will finally answered. He was still facing away from Hannibal, impatiently waiting for the couple ahead of them to finish unloading their cart. He pressed his body up against the bar of the cart, trying to physically get away from Hannibal, who was standing close from behind.

Part of him wanted his friend to touch him, but the other part was still extremely pissed that Hannibal had been with other people.

After a minute or two, the couple in front of them finally finished paying for their groceries. Will pushed the cart forward and ignored Hannibal through the entire transaction, or tried to, anyway.

"Sorry, we're pretty limited with staff at the moment, so you two might have to bag your own groceries." The cashier told them through a dispassionate expression.

Will sighed before looking at Hannibal, who looked look back at him. Hannibal nodded and slid past his friend from behind, brushing his crotch up against Will's backside, accidentally (?) as he tried to get over to the other side of the cart to bag their groceries.

Will shuddered a bit from Hannibal brushing up against him. He blushed and forced himself to hold it together. He forgot how great Hannibal's body felt.

Keep it together, Will!

Hannibal maneuvered his slender, yet athletic, body past the cart toward the end of the aisle. He started bagging the groceries while smiling at the cashier who kept commenting on how good looking he was.

Will rolled his eyes at the two as he impatiently waited for the cashier to stop gushing over Hannibal and finish ringing up the total price. After paying for the groceries, he pushed the cart out of the aisle, purposely pushing Hannibal away from the counter so the cashier could stop gawking over his friend.

"Come on, Hannibal. Let's go." Will huffed, as he used the cart to herd his best friend away from the aisle and toward the exit. Hannibal waved goodbye to the cashier after saying "Have a nice day!" He then moved out of the way at the end of the cart to walk with Will.

Will rolled his eyes again as he sped up walking with the cart. Hannibal caught up with him, however, but refrained from talking about Tobias to give his friend some space. Once they reached Hannibal's car, the boys unloaded the groceries in silence before sliding into the car and driving toward Will's house...still in complete silence.

Ugh this is so awkward...

Chapter End Notes

I chose for Brian and Jimmy to argue over rum and cokes because when I first started writing this chapter, I think I was getting ready to go out to a place where they have really great rum and cokes...

Part Sixteen

About thirty minutes and an extremely awkward car ride later...

Will sighed with relief as the car finally pulled into the driveway. He could tell Hannibal wanted to talk to him about that Tobias guy still, but he prevented his friend from doing so by jumping out of the car and rushing over to the trunk to retrieve a few groceries.

Hannibal lingered in the driver's seat a little longer, trying to figure out the best way to approach his friend concerning the situation. He figured he would let the issue go for a while and continue to give his friend the much-needed space he seemed to desire.

He thought maybe he could return to their playful behavior from the night before and this morning; the entire night they laughed and cuddled with each other while streaming episodes of *The Hunt*. Even at the mall, before Franklyn showed up and ruined the work he had done to get his friend back, Hannibal had noticed that Will seemed a little more relaxed around him.

I won't bring up Tobias until we're alone again...usually I can get him to smile if I poke fun at him.

Hannibal smiled to himself, yet a little short sighted, almost missing the point that his friend probably didn't want to speak to him at all. However, nothing stopped Hannibal when he was determined, which was most of the time.

After a minute of silent contemplation, Hannibal got off the car to help Will with the bags.

Will and Hannibal lugged the groceries into the Grahams' house. They managed to do so in three trips, not really acknowledging each other during the entire process. Will's father was outside in the yard, trimming the hedges, not indicating that he was willing to help, but instead poked fun at the boys as they struggled to carry the items in.

Will kept frowning because he was extremely irritated, but Hannibal playfully jabbed back at his father which infuriated Will even more. Most of the anger stemmed from everyone else appearing to be all right and put together, while he felt like his entire life was falling apart and that his best friend was going around fucking random people.

When they finally got every single grocery bag inside the house, they were met with Will's mother, who was standing in the kitchen, looking through a few of the bags with a concerned expression on her face.

"Will, did you get the Ziti? She asked, pulling a few items out of the bag she was holding, as if expecting each item would give her a clue as to where the Ziti might be.

Will looked at Hannibal then back at his mother. "Uh….? He answered slowly, trying to remember the list of pasta his mother had wanted him to buy.

“I don’t think we did.” Hannibal said stepping in. Will grimaced at his friend, knowing that his mother would make them go back to the store to get a box of Ziti.

“Aw, could you go back to the store and get a box of Ziti, sweetheart? I wanted to make baked Ziti for dinner.” Will’s mother asked as sweetly as possible, which Will couldn’t help but faintly smile back at, even though he really didn’t want to because he was extremely annoyed.

Will grimaced through a half smile and tried to not roll his eyes. He didn’t want to get back in the car with Hannibal nor spend any more time with him.

I fucking just want to be alone...why can’t everyone just leave me the fuck alone?!

“Can’t we just use the Penne pasta? They look the same.” He huffed picking up the box of Penne, cooling his internal anger so his friend and mother wouldn’t noticed.

Both Hannibal and Will’s mother looked at each other as if Will had no clue what he was talking about when it came to pasta dishes.

“Not the same, honey.” Will’s mother patiently explained.

“You would want to use Ziti pasta to make baked Ziti, Will.” Hannibal chimed in, grinning at Will’s cuisine ignorance, attempting to be lighthearted as possible, you know, to get his friend to smile again.

Will sighed, rubbing the temples on the side of his head. “Why? It *all* tastes the same.”

Both Hannibal and Will’s mother looked at each other again and laughed. Will, taking the very aggravating hint, marched out of the kitchen toward the outside of the house, cursing to himself in annoyance.

“Hey wait, Will! It was all in jest!” Will heard Hannibal yell after him.

Will walked up to his father who was getting ready to trim a branch off a tree. “Could I borrow your car please? I have to get Ziti for mom.” He tried to say as calmly as possible although he was fuming from the inside.

Will’s father looked at him then back at his trimming tools. “Car’s in the shop and I need to use your mother’s car in a minute or so to pick up some items for our fishing trip. Have Hannibal take you, son.”

Will rolled his eyes. Everyone was annoying the shit out of him.

He caught out the corner of his eye Hannibal walking out of the house and waving at him. He sighed as he walked over to his friend’s car, waiting for Hannibal to unlock it.

“It’s unlocked already.” Hannibal said on approach.

“Thanks for helping out, Hannibal!” Will’s father shouted as he turned on the tree trimmer.

Hannibal waved back and Will sighed heavily as he slid into the car. Hannibal hopped in after and waited to turn the car on.

He slowly looked over at Will. “Will—”

“*Just* take me to the fucking store, Hannibal.” Will interjected, rubbing his forehead, which was throbbing in pain from frustration.

Hannibal remained calmed, lingering his gaze a little longer before turning his body forward to start the engine.

Again, they drove in complete awkward and extremely unpleasant silence back to the store.

About thirty minutes later…

As soon as Hannibal pulled into the parking lot of the grocery store, Will jumped out of the car, ran into the building and headed for the aisle with the pasta.

He hurriedly scanned the pasta section and found a box of Ziti, thinking that he had gotten away from Hannibal quickly enough to spend less time with him as humanly possible.

Will sighed before straightening up to leave the aisle. Almost immediately, Hannibal popped up right next to him without notice.

“Ah!” Will exclaimed dropping the box of Ziti, shocked that Hannibal had caught up with him so swiftly.

Damn his light step. Will thought to himself. *He would be a great serial killer…*

“I forgot how quickly you moved.” Hannibal smirked, putting his hands on his hips while gazing down at his friend. He was still trying to diffuse the drama with his best friend with humor, but it wasn’t working.

Will shoved his way past Hannibal. “Come on, let’s go.” He walked briskly toward the cashier line.

Hannibal caught up with him again, trying to get him to slow down and talk. He decided that the few minutes they had alone in the grocery store would be enough for him to explain the deal with Tobias instead of trying to explain it back at the Grahams’.

Besides, Hannibal knew Will would only try to escape from him the minute they got back home if he didn’t corner his friend in the store and attempt to speak with him as calmly as possible.

“Hey, Will, hey. Wait a minute.” Hannibal stepped in front of Will to get him to stop walking so fast.

Will finally stopped to avoid running into his friend who was blocking his path. His anger level shot to an eleven on a zero to ten scale; he had had enough of Hannibal trying to wiggle out of his constant bullshit.

“What, Hannibal? Get the fuck out of the way.” He tried marching past Hannibal, but Hannibal blocked him gently with his arm. He let his friend rest his hands on his shoulders, feeling halfway defeated, yet determined to prevent himself from crying in front of his best friend, again.

“Can we talk please?” Hannibal asked, pleading through his eyes for his friend to give him a break.

Will backed away, almost seething in anger. He felt his fist crushing the box of Ziti. “Hannibal, I don’t want to fucking talk about you fuckin—”

Suddenly, Will felt someone tap him on his shoulder. He turned around and found Franklyn standing behind him with another guy who was slightly taller than him. The guy with Franklyn was smirking at Will, while Franklyn was crouching slightly behind his friend as if he were in fear for his life.

Will looked back at Hannibal as he backed away from Franklyn and his friend. He sensed that there was something off about the way the two guys had approached them. Hannibal’s demeanor had completely changed as well.

“Tobias.” Hannibal calmly greeted the guy with Franklyn.

Will had to prevent himself from gawking. *This guy is Tobias???*

He wanted to punch this Tobias guy in the face. He felt himself move forward. He couldn’t fucking believe he was standing in front of the guy who had fucked his best friend. His body and his mind blindly agreed that the only solution to the problem was to hit this guy as hard as possible to keep him in his place.

“Hannibal.” Tobias answered back, still smirking.

Will felt Hannibal grab him by the end of his jacket from behind. He felt a slight tug as if his friend was trying to get him to stay put, but he couldn’t help his feelings. He wanted to hit Tobias and then probably Franklyn who had ruined their mall outing earlier in the day with his clingy bullshit.

“Is this the guy, Franklyn?” Tobias asked Franklyn, indicating Will, but looking mostly at Hannibal.

Hannibal knew he needed to get Will and himself out of the store as quickly as possible to prevent an inevitable confrontation between themselves and Tobias and Franklyn. However,

Will's behavior wasn't helping; he could feel through the tug on his friend's jacket that Will wanted to confront Tobias and possibly Franklyn, who had been very rude earlier.

"Y-yes…" Franklyn meekly responded, acting as if he didn't have anything to do with the incoming fight between the four boys, in a grocery store of all places.

Tobias tried penetrating Will's personal space and Will responded by stepping closer. Hannibal attempted to sidestep in between the two of them, but Franklyn ended up acting first...why? Your guess is as good as mine…

Franklyn stepped in front of Tobias and half shoved Will. Will shoved him back, which prompted an attempted shove by Tobias, but he was thwarted by a shove from Hannibal.

Franklyn, again, making the situation even worse than it really needed to be, hit Will in the face, flailing his arms about, half shouting (well shrieking, really), probably unaware he had punched someone in the face with his erratic behavior.

The punch wasn't too bad, it shocked Will more than anything else since Franklyn had been acting scared prior to the fight. Yet, he ended up trying to grab Franklyn, who was behaving like a maniac in the middle of this debacle. He felt someone grab him from behind instead and jerk him around. It was Tobias, who had a firm hold on his body.

Hannibal pushed Franklyn out of the way, who ended up falling to the ground. The shove from Hannibal wasn't strong enough to knock Franklyn to the ground, but Franklyn took the opportunity to make a scene. He laid out on the ground, writhing back and forth, shrieking about his expensive phone probably getting damaged from the fall.

"My phone! I think my phone is damaged! It was $300!!" Franklyn shouted, holding his hips as if they were broken.

Tobias launched Will into a display stand of cereal boxes right before Hannibal grabbed him and held him by the collar. Will fell over the display and rolled over onto his back. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Franklyn rolling back and forth on his back like a defenseless turtle flipped over onto its shell. Will shook his head a bit after frowning at Franklyn. He sat up and saw Tobias and Hannibal wrestling on the ground.

"What the fuck …? Beverly asked slowly. She couldn't tell if she was shocked or amused by this fight.

Will shook his head. "I know. I know. Let me finish."

By the time Hannibal and Tobias were wrestling on the ground, the few people in the grocery store had noticed the fight and one of the cashiers tried to break it up.

“Hey boys, break it up!” The cashier shouted, stepping over Franklyn’s now supine body, huffing exaggeratedly from the fall to the ground.

Through the scuffle between Tobias and Hannibal, the cashier got slapped in the face by flailing arms from both boys which knocked the cashier to the ground, making a very painful sounding rough landing in the process.

Tobias and Hannibal continued to wrestle around with each other, both trading blows and the upper hand in the fight. Will finally got his bearings and jumped up to help Hannibal. He almost tripped over Franklyn and the cashier on the way to help to best friend, but managed to avoid falling over again, even as Franklyn tried reaching for him to use his body as a support to get up.

“Oh my god, get off me!” Will nearly shouted, yanking Franklyn’s arm away from his torso. Franklyn fell back over onto the ground, continuing to breathe heavily as if he fought the greatest battle of his life.

Once Will reached Hannibal and Tobias, Tobias flung an unexpected elbow in his face. The blow to the face didn’t faze Will, however; he was completely focused on trying to help his friend.

Tobias had Hannibal pinned to the ground. Will jumped on Tobias and held onto to him like a rabid animal. Tobias jerked around a bit trying to get Will off his back, while Hannibal took a moment to catch his breath.

“Someone call the police!” One of the bystanders shouted.

“Break up the fight please!” Another shocked person chimed in.

“Wow that Graham kid can really hold his own.” A person commented, not really helping the situation.

Tobias managed to get Will off his back by shaking him around a bit. The force hurled Will’s body to the ground, but he got up again and rushed Tobias from behind. Tobias fell over, pinned down by Will’s body. Hannibal got up and tried to get Will off Tobias, inwardly angry with how terrible the situation had become.

“No really, what the *fuck* is going on?!” Beverly confusingly asked, but with a slight grin, more amused than shocked now.

Will rolled his eyes. “Yeah, I know. Let me finish, okay? I know…”

"Will!" Hannibal shouted, trying to pry his friend off his offending foe.

Will had Tobias by the collar, but Tobias managed to flip his body over to the ground after struggling free from the grasp. Will fell onto his shoulder, wincing in pain. Hannibal grabbed Tobias by the collar and tossed him away from Will. Tobias grabbed Hannibal by the tail of his shirt and yanked him back to the ground, resuming their scuffle from before.

By this time, another cashier managed to intervene and break up the fight. Tobias and Hannibal were pulled apart, trying to reach for each other. Will was sitting up, holding onto his elbow and Franklyn was lying on the ground crying about his broken phone.

Will looked at Hannibal. Hannibal was staring down Tobias who was also staring back. Will had never seen his friend so angry before in his entire life.

He felt himself getting angry with Hannibal. It was his fault why they had ended up fighting in the grocery store.

God. Fuck, Hannibal…what the fuck…?

Part Seventeen

About an hour later...

Thankfully, no one decided to press charges. Even though the fight was technically started by Franklyn, he ended up blaming everything on Will (!). Yet, Franklyn "graciously" (his word, not mine) acquiesced to an apology from Will, who had to stifle all his pride to give the apology to avoid making the situation any worse than it already was.

The boys ended up in the same hospital but were treated in different sections. As far as Will was concerned, he never wanted to see either Tobias or Franklyn ever again. He also thought maybe he never wanted to see Hannibal again, since the fight had been about the one night stand his best friend had had with Tobias.

There weren't enough exam rooms in the hospital that day and the boys only had minor injuries, so they were placed on gurneys outside in the hallway. Hannibal was sitting down on a gurney while Will was frantically pacing back and forth, visibly angry with the whole ordeal.

"So, we got into a little skirmish." Hannibal offered, holding an ice pack to his nose.

He had a tiny cut on the bridge of his nose and a bruised side, but besides that, he was trying to be his usual charming self. This pissed Will off even more.

Will stopped pacing for a split second to get into his friend's face. "We got into a fucking brawl at the fucking grocery store because you can't keep your *fucking* dick in your fucking pants!" His voice raised in earnest.

The nurses and doctors within earshot of Hannibal and Will stopped working briefly to look at the commotion. Will stared at Hannibal while Hannibal simply looked back at him, remaining poised.

"Even given the level of vulgarity in that statement, I'm inclined to somewhat agree with you." Hannibal calmly responded, escalating the tension between himself and his friend.

"Are you fucking kidding me, Hannibal?!" Now Will was shouting. He planted himself right in front of his friend, fuming from anger.

"This is *your* fault. Your 'best friend' Franklyn probably insinuated something about the two of us to Tobias, which caused him to react the way that he did." Will was basically wagging his finger in Hannibal's face.

Hannibal remained unflinching, fully aware that Tobias had confronted them out of jealously.

Will walked over to the other side of the hallway near some medical equipment. "And then I have to apologize?! Hannibal you *really* fucked up this time." He spat, crossing his arms.

Hannibal only looked back at him, waiting for his friend to finish ranting. Will huffed before slumping his body down into a hard plastic chair. His face and shoulder throbbed with pain. He was so incredibly angry with his friend, he could barely look at him.

“Will, I’m sorry.” Hannibal let out after a minute or so of complete silence, save for the background hospital noise.

“Hannibal, stop. I don’t want to hear it.” Will responded, holding his face in his hands.

All Hannibal could do was stare intently back at his friend. He was genuinely apologetic for the drama Will got caught up in.

Earlier, he had been planning to diffuse the situation when he was alone with Will, knowing that Tobias had exhibited confrontational tendencies based on gossip from Franklyn.

He seems quiet, but he has his dark side, too. Franklyn had once told Hannibal during one of their tutoring sessions before the one-night stand with Tobias.

I’m not sure what to do, you know? Since his not ‘really’ my best friend…but I’m his...isn’t that weird? Hannibal had gotten to a point where Franklyn was bothering the shit out of him, but the session was almost over, and he had almost gotten used to Franklyn droning on and on about his friend Tobias.

Anyway, you wouldn’t like him. He’s too needy.

One night, after having been distraught over his best friend the past year, Hannibal made a terrible mistake and flirted with Tobias at a party Franklyn had invited him to when he was home for a previous break. They ended up having a one-night stand, an event that Hannibal tried to push to the recesses of his mind, but the issue came to the forefront when Franklyn brought up Tobias in front of Will.

All the work Hannibal had put in to get his friend back, was completely stomped on by Franklyn’s pettiness and Tobias’ jealously.

“Hannibal, stop. I don’t want to hear it.”

Hannibal finally took the hint and left his friend alone until a doctor came to see them about their injuries. They both received an examination before the doctor cleared them for discharge.

Immediately after the fight, Will had to drive both himself and Hannibal to the hospital since Hannibal had sustained more injuries from the scuffle with Tobias, so Hannibal’s car was waiting for them out in the parking lot once they were discharged.

Will wanted to call a cab; he couldn’t be near his friend any longer. He was so upset that Hannibal had dragged him into his bullshit that even the proximity to his friend was making him nauseous with anger. However, Hannibal managed to convince Will to let him drive him home.

“You need to drop off that box of pasta for your mother,” Hannibal began, “but you don’t want to run into her, do you?”

Will knew Hannibal was right. By now, both of his parents had gone shopping for their fishing trip in Will’s mother’s car and probably wouldn’t be back until another hour or so due to Will’s father’s diligence and tediousness in buying the correct and most useful supplies.

“Fine. Drive me home quickly then. I don’t want to be anywhere *near* you.” Will spat back.

Hannibal drove Will to his house, and luckily his parents were still out. He ran into the house and left the somewhat crushed box of Ziti on the kitchen counter. He wanted to run upstairs to his room but was afraid of having to explain what had happened at the store when his parents came home. So, he decided to get back into the car with Hannibal, although he was still extremely upset with his friend.

Will wasn’t sure why he wouldn’t let himself get away from his best friend, which angered him even more. He needed Hannibal in the moment to avoid a scene with his parents, but he was incredibly hurt by his friend’s actions.

Will slowly slid back into the car with Hannibal. Hannibal turned on the car, but before pulling out of the driveway he turned his body slightly to speak to Will.

“Where do you want to go?” He asked softly, calmly taking advantage of his friend not completely physically pushing him away.

“I don’t know, Hannibal. Just drive somewhere.” Will answered, his face buried in a hand propped up against the passenger window.

About thirty minutes later of total awkward silence...

Both Hannibal and Will had been driving down an isolated road from the main streets. Will was still fuming; he was so angry with having to put up with Hannibal all day.

Why did I get into this fucking car with him? I want to go home now. Will ranted to himself.

“We can go over to my parents’ house. My parents are going to be gone for a few days. You can stay the night if you want.” Hannibal explained as he drove in the direction of his house.

Will was slumped down in the passenger seat. His face throbbed from the cheap punch from Franklyn.

“Take me back home, Hannibal. I already told you, I don’t want to be anywhere near you.” He seethed.

Hannibal tried rubbing Will’s arm to calm him down. “Will, I don’t think that’s a—”

“Take me *fucking* home!” Will jerked toward Hannibal as he shouted.

Hannibal, appearing as he if wasn’t caught off guard by Will shouting at him, pulled the car off to the side of the road and turned the engine off. He took his time looking back over at his friend.

Hannibal took a moment before placing a hand on the headrest of the Will’s chair. “Will, listen to me, please. Don’t you think it would be best not to explain to your parents why you were so late getting home? You’ll make the situation even worse than it already is, especially, if your mother sees your face.”

“You can tell them that you decided to stay over at my place for a few days before the fishing trip and by then, hopefully the bruises will have disappeared.”

Hannibal ended by slowly moving his hand to caress Will’s neck. Will hitched forward a bit to avoid being touched by his friend, but he found himself agreeing with Hannibal about avoiding his house for a while, so he didn’t have to explain the fight at the grocery store.

I hate that he’s always right...

Will sighed. “Fine.”

Hannibal lingered his gaze at his friend before turning the car back on. They drove in silence toward Hannibal’s house.

About thirty minutes later…

Hannibal opened the front door for Will to enter first. Will said nothing as he entered the house, completely annoyed with the pain radiating throughout his body and the fact that he still had to be around Hannibal.

Will walked up the stairs, but instead of heading toward his friend’s bedroom, he walked past the door and walked toward the guest room down the hall. Hannibal caught up with him and gently held onto his arm to prevent him from going any further.

“Will, you can sleep with me.” Hannibal offered quietly.

Will pulled his arm away as he spun around to look at Hannibal. “I don’t want to. Goodnight.” He marched into the guest room and slammed the door.

After a minute or so, Hannibal slowly walked up to the guest room and lingered by the door. He finally knocked on the door after a moment of hesitation, but there was no answer, not even an angry reply from his friend.

“Will, may I come in? I need to speak with you...please.” Hannibal asked softly. He waited about five minutes before he turned around to walk back to his bedroom.

As Hannibal turned away from the door to walk down the hallway, the door to the guest room slightly opened. Hannibal pivoted and slowly approached. He walked into the bedroom and saw Will sitting on the bed, holding his face and his side.

“May I sit down?” Hannibal asked, waiting by the door, careful not to push his friend any further away.

Will slowly nodded, which relieved Hannibal, but he didn’t let it show; he was trying to remain as calm as possible for his best friend so he could talk to him. He slowly approached the bed and sat down next to Will, who didn’t flinch from the weight shift.

Hannibal took his time before speaking up. “I’m sorry about Tobias...and the fight. I didn’t think this would turn out the way that it had…”

Will remained silent. Hannibal took it as a hint to continue.

“I was unaware of how you felt about me seeing other people. I hadn’t spoken to you in months, and I had no idea you would be upset if you found out that I had been with anyone else.” Hannibal added quietly.

Will stayed silent. Hannibal noticed that his friend was rubbing his side still. Hannibal looked at Will’s side then back up at his face. Will seemed completely unfazed by what he was saying.

Will only appeared that way because he was preventing himself from getting emotional and possibly start crying in front of Hannibal. It was taking all his mental and what was left of his physical strength not to do so.

He felt a weight shift again on the bed and noticed that Hannibal had repositioned his body to lie down. Will only turned around enough to look at his friend’s legs. He couldn’t turn around to look Hannibal in the eyes; he knew he would start crying if he did. He needed to gather himself before looking directly at his friend again.

After about a few minutes of complete silence, Will felt Hannibal slowly caress his backside. His body shuddered from the touch; it was different from earlier in the day when Hannibal had touched him the few times in the mall and the store. The touch felt more loving and sensual than any touch he had ever felt before, however, he couldn’t settle on whether he was still angry or willing to forgive his friend.

How can I keep myself from getting so upset about Hannibal? Will thought to himself, as he continued to let Hannibal stroke his back.

Will knew he was overly sensitive when it came to his best friend. They had started a romantic relationship and it failed. His friend was the first person he had had sex with and now he couldn’t seem to move away from the emotional attachment.

How has Hannibal been able to do this? I'm a wreck…

Will just assumed that Hannibal had sex with no emotional attachments with every single person he had been with including himself. Will thought maybe he could do the same; detach those feelings and just have fun with whomever came across. Hannibal made it look so easy, well that's what Will thought anyway. He had no idea how his best friend felt toward him and wouldn't know until years later.

Suddenly, Will got on top of Hannibal. He straddled his body, placing his hands over Hannibal's head and lowering his upper half down enough for their chests to rub up against each other. He purposely hovered his lips over his friends, enough to tease him.

"Did you think about me when you fucked Tobias?" Will whispered, looking Hannibal directly in the eyes.

Even though Hannibal tried to remain unflinching by the comment, Will knew he got a rise out of him. He felt one of Hannibal's legs bump up against his and a hand slide its way down his backside. It felt great, but Will was focused on painfully teasing his friend.

"I did." Hannibal finally admitted after a few seconds of silent thought, looking directly up at Will.

Will almost lost it from the admission. He really thought Hannibal had forgotten about him, but it also angered him that his friend was capable of having random casual sex with someone else. The two dueling thoughts were driving him insane, and he needed to get away from his friend.

"You're pathetic, Hannibal." Was all Will could manage as he tried to jump off the bed but was caught in midair gently by the arm.

"I really don't understand why you're being so mean spirited, Will." Hannibal said, slowly caressing Will's arm, trying to get him to sit back down on the bed with him.

Will pulled his arm away. He stared back at Hannibal before looking down at his feet.

"Sex *means* something to the rest of us, Hannibal. Everyone else has feelings, but you seem to do whatever you want." Will responded, feeling his eyes warm up with hot tears.

He looked back at Hannibal. Will could tell his friend was hurt by what he had just said, but he didn't care. Hannibal needed to know that he hurt his feelings. He needed to know if Hannibal truly cared about him or was just using him.

Hannibal crossed his arms before leaning up against the headboard of the bed. "Will, I wouldn't say everything that I've ever said to you before we were intimate if I didn't care about you. And I especially meant it when we did end up having sex."

Will gulped and stared back at his friend; he didn't expect Hannibal to say something like that to him. He really was unaware of how Hannibal felt about him (but he still didn't know

that Hannibal was in love with him) and really did believe that he was this terrible person who went around fucking everything in sight.

Will slowly sat back down on the bed. His fingers on both hands were interlaced with each other and sitting clenched on top of his lap.

“Do you really mean that, Hannibal?”

Hannibal shifted his body so he could lean forward. He gently took a hold of Will’s chin and pulled him close to kiss him.

“Of course.” He said, rubbing his lips up against his friend's before pressing them into a passionate kiss.

Part Eighteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will, swiftly caught up in the moment, couldn't help himself and kissed his best friend back.

Dammit, Hannibal... Will thought to himself, struggling to reconcile his emotions.

On one hand, he was still sort of upset with Hannibal, even after his friend explicitly declared his feelings for him. Yet, on the other hand, he missed being with Hannibal.

Over the past year, coupled with not wanting to know whether Hannibal was seeing anyone else, Will couldn't stop thinking about having sex with his friend, and contacting him would only make the urges even more unbearable.

However, in this exact moment, through the fog of sexual desire and aggravation, something in Will's mind clicked; from this instance on, Will figured he could be just as casual with sex as Hannibal was.

He would give into Hannibal now, but his friend would have to prove to him from this point onward if he really did care about him.

Why not have fun in the meantime?

Will scooted his body closer toward Hannibal and placed a hand on his friend's thigh, rubbing it gently and then more vigorously as the kiss intensified. Will let Hannibal pull him down onto the bed with him; he laid on top of Hannibal, grinding his hips into his friend's crotch.

Will straightened up slightly, legs hugging Hannibal's body, and removed his shirt. He leaned back down, hovering over Hannibal, kissing his neck before running a hand up Hannibal's shirt to caress his chest. The move elicited a slight moan from his friend, which prompted Will to rub one of Hannibal's nipples before moving his hand down to rub his crotch. Hannibal moaned again, as Will rubbed his friend through the fabric of his pants.

"Fuck, Hannibal, you feel amazing." Will moaned back, as he continued to kiss Hannibal's neck and rub his crotch at the same time. He felt Hannibal push up against his hand, growing harder with every single movement.

Hannibal had on hand on Will's backside and the other placed on the nap of his friend's neck. He slowly pushed himself into Will's hand as he continued to kiss him back, moaning in between each breath for fresh air.

Will started to remove Hannibal's shirt, keeping his hand on his crotch. They stayed in this embrace, until Hannibal flipped them both around on the bed. Will landed on his back but continued to kiss Hannibal through a faint smile from the move.

Hannibal rubbed Will's chest as Will took off his shirt. Hannibal pushed himself into his friend, grinding his hips slowly downwards, moaning in unison with Will. Will pushed himself upward as he wrapped both arms around Hannibal's body holding onto him tightly.

Hannibal kissed Will's neck, snuggling his nose into his friend's skin, drinking in his scent while lightly running a hand through Will's hair.

Will unzipped Hannibal's pants, pulling them down just enough to rub a hand over his friend's ass. Hannibal moaned from Will touching him, grinding his hips even more into his friend's. Will managed to flip them back over in the bed, clinging onto his friend, kissing him on his lips and neck.

Will straightened up again. He reached down and rubbed Hannibal's crotch, taking his time with his movement. He started down below, slowly making his way upwards before stopping short of pulling his friend's cock out of his boxers. Will looked down at Hannibal and grinned before leaning forward to kiss him. Hannibal accepted the lingering kiss, moaning in response.

Will rubbed the tip of Hannibal's cock with two fingers before pulling it out of his friend's boxers. He continued to rub Hannibal before scooting further down his body so that his face was close to Hannibal's cock. Will looked up at his friend again before tilting downward to swallow Hannibal whole. Hannibal moaned as Will bobbed up and down along his shaft, licking his cock and groaning in pleasure.

Will placed a hand on Hannibal's chest to control his movements; Hannibal was completely caught up in how great the blow job from Will was that he couldn't help but fiercely push back into his friend's warm wet mouth.

Will sucked on Hannibal's cock for a minute or two longer before scooting his body up along Hannibal's until he was close to his friend's ear.

"Where's the lube?" Will asked seductively.

Hannibal groaned before pointing in the direction of one dressers which was on the other side of the guestroom. Will took his time getting off the bed, lingering his hand on his friend's cock before slowly pulling away. He walked over to the dresser and found the lube in the top drawer right away.

Will sauntered back to the bed, biting his bottom lip as he watched Hannibal waiting for him, barely containing himself from receiving a long awaited blow job from his best friend.

Will snapped open the cap to the lube, squeezing out an ample amount onto his friend's cock before rubbing the lube all over Hannibal. Hannibal shuddered a bit from the touch, which prompted Will to rub even more. He looked at Hannibal before getting back on top of his friend. Hannibal's eyes widened a little; he had never seen Will so confident during sex.

Will look at Hannibal again before removing his own boxers. He lowered himself gently, falling over a little, but catching himself by putting his hands on Hannibal's chest.

“Ah, ah…” Will whimpered slightly.

Hannibal held onto him, but the sensation of feeling the inside of Will overtook his emotions. He tightened his grasp around his friend’s body before rolling over on top of him. Will wrapped his legs around Hannibal and pushed back. They were both moaning, getting caught up the sexual energy emanating between the two of them.

Will held onto Hannibal even tighter. He pushed up against his friend, pushing even harder with every thrust from Hannibal, who was thrusting vigorously into his ass.

After a few minutes of Hannibal fucking him, Will tilted his head up to whisper into his friend’s ear.

“Can I fuck you now?” He asked, not meekly, but coyly, which sent sensual shockwaves through Hannibal’s body.

Instead of answering directly, Hannibal flipped them over again, indicating that he was happy to oblige. Will moaned loudly as his friend slid out of him as they switched positions, Hannibal taking his time with his movement. Will repositioned his body on top of Hannibal before rubbing his own cock with the lube.

Will pushed himself inside his friend, without any direct warning. Hannibal moaned which elicited a pleased groan from Will.

He thrust his cock in and out of Hannibal; his body’s urges taking over his mind, forcing him to pull in and out harder and quicker with every movement. He felt Hannibal hold onto him tightly with both legs and arms, groaning with pleasure. He had never heard his friend sound the way he did in this moment and it turned him on even more than he had expected.

Will pumped himself in and out of Hannibal for a few minutes, propping himself up with one hand on the bed while using the other to hold onto his friend. After one more intense thrust, Will pulled himself out and slid back down onto Hannibal.

Hannibal, taken a little off guard by the move, almost didn’t catch Will as his friend slid his ass down his cock.

Will fell over slightly but placed his hands on Hannibal’s chest to hold himself up. Hannibal held onto him and pumped his body up and down into Will before his body began to tense up.

“Oh my god…” Hannibal let his thoughts escape as he moaned out loud.

Will stared at him through his sexual haze. He remembered Hannibal being reserved the last time they had sex. He tilted forward slightly to whisper into his friend’s ear again.

“Are you going to come? I can feel your body wanting to.” Will teased his friend.

All Hannibal could do was nod back as he thrust his cock in and out of Will a bit longer before he felt his body tense to the point of orgasm. Will straightened up and held onto his own cock, bobbing up and down slowly on Hannibal’s. He rubbed himself until he felt his

own body tense with wanting sexual release. He waited before he felt Hannibal groan out his release.

Will's body shuddered as he came all over Hannibal's chest. He collapsed on top of his friend and held him tightly, breathing heavily.

"…let's go back to your room." Will murmured. He got up from the bed and gently tugged Hannibal by the arm through the guestroom door to the hallway, stopping first to see if anyone was around since they were both naked.

Hannibal chuckled. "No one's here." He reminded his friend.

Will nodded and grinned before forcing Hannibal to walk quickly to his bedroom. They both hopped onto Hannibal's bed as soon as Will opened the door.

Will got on top of Hannibal to grind his hips into his friend's again, breathing heavily. They both got hard again and rutted up against each other before coming all over each other again. Will slumped down onto the bed next to Hannibal before rolling over to lay on his friend's chest.

He felt Hannibal run a hand through his hair; it felt so nice, but Will was determined not to fully give into his emotions toward his friend. The entire time while they fucked, Will partly thought about how he could basically give Hannibal the cold shoulder after. But, of course, he also thought about how great it was to have sex with his friend again, although he was still slightly upset with the Tobias drama.

Will slid over Hannibal's body to lie down next to him. He felt Hannibal wrap an arm around his shoulder and pull him close.

"That was nice…" Hannibal whispered, completely unaware of Will's scheming.

Will let Hannibal pull him closer for a quick kiss on the forehead. He laid next to his friend a little longer before abruptly jumping out of the bed. He headed over to Hannibal's dresser and found a shirt and a pair of boxers that almost fit his body. He could see out of the corner of his eye that his friend was watching him dress in his clothes. He knew he was teasing Hannibal even more by wearing his clothes.

"I think we should move into together no matter what happens." Will casually offered as he pulled one of Hannibal's shirts over his head. He was smirking at his friend as the shirt uncovered his face.

Hannibal sat up in the bed. Will could tell that Hannibal was trying not to betray that he was excited by the offer, but Will could see right through his friend. He knew what he was doing was cruel to a certain point, taking advantage of Hannibal's feelings. However, this was the only way Will figured he could cope with his own feelings regarding his friend.

Of course, he's making the situation even worse and OF COURSE it ended up biting him square in the ass (i.e. future "friends with benefits", making Hannibal jealous with someone random guy, etc. etc.).

“Oh, well that sounds…intriguing.” Hannibal coyly answered back, crossing his arms behind his head up against the headboard of his bed.

Will grinned before walking back over to the bed. He jumped on top of Hannibal, leaning forward enough to almost kiss him.

“Well come on now, Hannibal. I figured you would be *more* excited than this.” Will teased before he tilted forward to kiss his friend.

Hannibal kissed him back through a smile, but before the kiss got heated, Will pulled away. He jumped off the bed again, walking toward the bedroom door. He turned around before exiting.

“I also think we should cool it with fooling around for a while, though. You know, so I can focus on school and/or finding a job.” Will grinned.

This statement was quite unlike the one given over a year before as an excuse for calling it quits on their nascent romantic relationship.

Actually, it wasn’t an excuse at all, it was more of a tease. Will knew Hannibal wanted him, but he needed to work for it. Will was going to have the upper hand this time around; he was so tired of getting so upset about his friend.

Hannibal waited before answering. Inwardly, he was a little confused by his best friend’s statement...well a little hurt, actually.

Hannibal’s facade had never faltered his entire life. Showing massive potential in the medical field and not even 30 yet, Hannibal managed to charm the pants off anyone who came into contact with him. No one really made him think twice...no one really besides his best friend Will Graham.

Hannibal had been sincere when he confessed to Frederick the night he went out with Abel that he had a crush on Will. Will was completely different than anyone he usually met, which also made him a lot more interesting. Also, Hannibal thought Will was very cute, not to mention better in bed than he had expected him to be.

Hannibal was so in love with Will, he knew he would do anything his friend needed him to do. Yet, the constant back and forth in their entire relationship was weighing heavy on his mind.

Especially after getting as close as possible to someone he cared about literally five minutes ago...

He was hurt but figured it would be better to go along with his best friend’s constant teasing.

Hannibal looked up at Will, managing not to betray his inner thoughts (he thought so anyway).

“That’s probably for the best.” He finally responded with a faint smile.

Will, seeing right through his friend's demeanor, grinned silently to himself. "I knew you would agree. Now, do you want to shower first or should I?" He walked back over to Hannibal, taking his time getting back on top of him before kissing his best friend on the lips.

He pulled away to reveal a now visibly confused Hannibal. Will smirked, fully aware of how terrible he was being teasing his friend, but he didn't care. He couldn't believe that he had this kind of power over someone like Hannibal. It was invigorating.

For the first time in a long time, Hannibal was at a loss for words. Will kept smiling. "I'll go first." He said, jumping off the bed.

"So that night, we ended up apologizing to one another and from there, until the fight we had about a year ago, we were...fine…" Will partially lied.

He didn't tell Beverly that they had sex that night because, as you probably already remember, Beverly only knows about the one time they had sex after Will's mother's funeral…(whoops).

Beverly squinted her eyes. She didn't believe him; she knew from the way her friend had ended the story that there was something Will had left out in between them reconciling and the fight from last year.

Will noticed but tried not to acknowledge the look. He could feel Beverly burning a hole through his brain. After a while, the intensity of the stare became too much for him to handle, so he settled on telling her only about the few times he had made out with Hannibal before living together and while they lived together. The make out sessions were what led up to the "fuck buddies" deal.

"Okay, okay. Fine. We made out like three times." Will admitted, holding up three fingers to illustrate his point.

Beverly's eyes widened. "Are you serious??"

Will sighed. "It was one time after my graduation, another time probably shouldn't even count because it was part of a stupid truth or dare game, and the third time…"

Will hesitated. The third time he had ended up making out with Hannibal, both of them had been extremely drunk at a party.

They made out and almost had sex, but the act was stymied by Hannibal's then boyfriend, who had been trying to call him to figure out where he was at the party so they could go home.

Will could remember how intense the moment had been between the two of them right before Hannibal answered his phone. Yet, his memory was a little fuzzy after the phone call…

“What? Why’d you stop? What happened the third time?” Beverly questioned.

Will looked at Beverly before slowly turning his head away. He couldn’t tell her that they almost ended up having sex the third time they made out. She would be suspicious of possible other times they fooled around, leading to her possibly suggest that Hannibal probably shouldn’t visit him next weekend or that he should break up with Molly…or that his whole world would fall apart because he didn’t know what the fuck to do….

“The third time, we made out at a party, but Hannibal had been seeing someone at the time...so it didn’t really go anywhere.” He half lied.

Beverly side eyed him again.

Will kept his cool. “We just made out. That was it.”

Beverly lingered a bit before taking a sip out of her water. Will felt relieved that his friend didn’t try to push the issue any further.

“Again, I’m sorry that Freddie forced you to choose between herself and Hannibal, but…” She hesitated for a moment, cautious of Will’s feelings, yet determined to get him to be honest.

“But I really don’t think it’s a good idea to wait until after Hannibal leaves to talk to Molly. I think she would feel betrayed that you didn’t say anything…” Beverly ended slowly.

Will looked at his friend and sighed. He knew on some rational fundamental level, Beverly was right. Yet, what if Molly forced him to choose her over Hannibal? And what if he was still hung up on his feelings and chose his girlfriend over his friend again?

He would probably never see Hannibal ever again. He couldn’t live with that...

Will knew it wasn’t the best solution…or even really the right one in other circumstances, but he had to keep his past relationship with Hannibal a secret. It was over and they’re just friends now.

Wait...are we still even friends...?

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Right now I am the same age as the young version of Hannibal in this particular volume of the story....but I am not a resident at a fancy hospital in New York who is secretly in love with their best friend. :p

Part Nineteen

Beverly watched Will fidget slightly in his chair. She knew he was trying to come up with yet another excuse as to why he couldn't be directly honest with either Molly and/or Hannibal.

She placed a gentle hand on his thigh, trying to soothe him. Will let her touch him, but he was far from calm. He felt the core of his body warm up with anxiousness at the thought of the situation he had created for himself.

Why did I do this?

"I know...I know…" Will finally let out, responding to Beverly's very rational, yet complicated advice.

Will couldn't add anymore to the conversation; he felt himself getting upset thinking about having to choose between his ex-girlfriend and Hannibal the last time he saw his friend.

Freddie doesn't know you the way I know you, Will.

No one knows you the way I know you…

I knew I was in love with you since that night, however, I fear the feelings are...unrequited…

"Ugh…" Will accidentally murmured out loud, clenching his side in emotional pain.

"What?" Beverly asked calmly, reaching to rub her friend's arm.

Will just shook his head. The memory of Hannibal confessing his love for him a year ago hurt too much to think about without getting emotional agitated again.

Beverly softly rubbed his arm as they both sat in silence. She also knew that Will was struggling to figure out the best solution for the upcoming weekend. She figured it would probably be best not to pressure her friend into talking to both Molly and Hannibal right away; Beverly decided that she would bring up the advice again later in the week, before the weekend, to give Will some space to think thoroughly.

She knew constantly pushing him to do the right thing would only backfire. Yet, she was also aware that if she didn't act quickly, Will would let the situation go unaddressed; forcing himself into a self-inflicted corner, driving himself to choose yet again between his girlfriend and Hannibal.

Beverly elected to lightly guide her friend to the right decision; she knew he needed her around as a comforting presence more than anything else and she was more than willing to oblige.

"So, what happened the first time you kissed Hannibal?" She tried to ask as playfully as possible.

The past between Will and Hannibal couldn't be helped, it was the past. Anything Will told her had already transpired and they couldn't change it.

She thought that maybe Will appreciated someone listening to his concerns out loud; maybe talking out loud about his past with his best friend would help him choose the right thing to do. That's what Beverly thought anyway...

Will knew Beverly was trying to diffuse the tension as much as possible, which he appreciated. The past was the past, and he couldn't do anything about it. Maybe talking more about his history with Hannibal out loud would help him choose the right thing to do? Well, of course, that's what Will thought anyway...

At least they were both on the same page without saying so out loud.

Will smiled a little. He looked down at his hands on his lap, thinking about the memory of kissing Hannibal at his graduation party.

"So, after the night we reconciled, we kept in pretty constant contact until the day of my graduation. Hannibal flew in from New York for the weekend and we spent the entire time together, acting as if everything was back to normal…" Will partially lied.

The truth was that everything wasn't back to normal. After Will had decided he could be just as casual with sex as he thought Hannibal to be, the tension between the two intensified and he couldn't help but think about his best friend sexually for most of the day, if not every hour of the day.

They started up their daily phone calls again, often teasing and flirting with the other on the phone; Hannibal careful not to push any further because of Will's request to hold off fooling around for a while and Will trying to step out of his shell more, coyly pushing the boundaries of their unusual relationship.

I think about you all the time. Will had once said to Hannibal, teasing him to no end on the phone.

Well, I hope only good thoughts. Hannibal said back playfully, still a little confused by his best friend's change in behavior.

Wouldn't you like to know?

"The night we...kissed…" Will began, wringing his hands a little, completely nervous about telling Beverly about this kiss, although he had told her about the first time they had sex. He was nervous because the kiss was initiated by him and Beverly didn't know that he had changed courses in his past sexual relationship with Hannibal.

Essentially, Will wasn't being honest with Beverly (obviously) and it was becoming a little difficult keeping his stories straight. He took a moment to himself to remember what he had said previously before continuing.

"...we had a party at my parent's house. After the party died down a little, Hannibal and I ended up talking to each other...alone…"

About eleven years ago...

About a week before Will's graduation, Will's mother had decided to host a huge party at their house. Will tried asking for a small dinner with a couple of friends, but his parents wanted to invite nearly everyone they knew who would be able to make it to the party.

Hannibal managed to switch a weekend with another resident at Mount Sinai and flew in to celebrate. He met up with the Grahams and attended all the ceremonies Will was obligated to attend for graduation.

Hannibal you don't have to go to everything this weekend. Will had said to his best friend, standing in his bedroom fidgeting with his graduation robes.

Hannibal had been sitting on his bed, watching him get ready. He had to prevent himself from touching Will; he couldn't believe that they had managed to keep in daily contact with each other and not fight about who was sleeping with whom.

Hannibal would do anything for his friend and being near him was enough. Yet, he felt himself desiring Will more and more every day.

Of course, I want to go to everything. But I know you hate all the attention...it's cute, however. Hannibal had answered back.

You think everything I do is "cute".

Not everything...sometimes you are "very cute".

The night after Will's graduation, Mrs. Graham had crammed a ton of people into their house to celebrate. Will had to make sure he thanked everyone for attending and for giving him some sort of graduation gift.

The entire night, he barely interacted with Hannibal; however, whenever Will got the chance, he would steal furtive glances toward his friend, watching his every move. He found himself smiling whenever Hannibal smiled and laughing whenever his best friend found a joke funny enough to laugh at.

Will tried a few times to join a conversation Hannibal was involved in, but different people kept pulling him away in different directions, constantly asking him questions about grad school and New York.

Will thought back to the night he found out that he had been accepted to Columbia. He had called Hannibal almost immediately, forgetting to tell his parents who had been sitting the

living room with him when he had received the email about his acceptance.

Oh my god... Will could hardly form the words he needed to string together to tell his best friend that he was going to Columbia.

Will? What's the matter? Are you all right? Hannibal had a difficult time trying to cipher his friend's phone call.

Hannibal, Hannibal, oh my god. I got into Columbia! Will finally let out. He almost dropped the phone in the process.

That's fantastic! Now you have more of a reason to move to New York.

*Well, you're there…that's more than any good reason I could give right now...*Will managed to answer back as flirtatiously as possible.

Will had been amazed lately with how much better he was getting at teasing his friend. It was extremely gratifying possessing this hold he had over Hannibal.

Besides getting into Columbia?

Even besides getting into Columbia…

At one point, Will's mother had dragged him into the kitchen to talk to someone she had once worked with who also got her master's degree in psychology from Columbia. Will patiently listened to his mother's former colleague, but his thoughts were centered around Hannibal's whereabouts.

I think I saw him talking in the hallway...

He thought about asking Hannibal to spend the night so they could watch their favorite movies together. He knew Hannibal would be more than happy to accept.

I'm terrible. Will smirked to himself, still completely unaware of his best friend's true feelings toward him.

After listening to his mother's colleague talk about the great things to do in New York and which neighborhoods were the most suitable to live in, Will seized an opportunity to excuse himself. He walked out of the kitchen, looking around for his friend.

He saw Hannibal hanging out in the hallway talking to a few people. Will stayed back a bit by the entry to the kitchen, waiting for Hannibal to finish his conversation to catch his attention.

Hannibal glanced out of the corner of his eye while he was in the middle of a conversation. He observed Will watching him. He smiled slightly, which prompted a blushed expression from his friend from across the room. He hadn't expected that; lately Will had been giving him the run around with where their relationship stood.

He had never seen Will behave this way. He thought it was a little strange how flirtatious his friend was being, even though Will had said that he wanted to focus on his studies instead of exploring a relationship with him.

Yet, he didn't push his friend away; as was mentioned before, Hannibal was grateful to be around Will the way they had been before they started having sex.

Are you going to come? I can feel your body wanting to…

The night they last had sex, after not speaking to each other for more than a year, felt different; in the beginning, it felt as if they could be in a romantic relationship. However, Hannibal didn't realize, until Will's behavior in bed, that his friend possibly didn't feel the same way.

Will crossed his arms and smiled back at Hannibal. He leaned up against the frame of the kitchen entry way, waiting for his best friend to approach him first. He watched Hannibal politely nod an exit from the group and start to make his way over to where he was standing.

Will felt himself beginning to fidget a bit, but he regained his composure, thinking about how much control he had over his friend's feelings for him.

Hannibal took his time walking up to Will, who shifted from side to side, anticipating meeting his friend in the middle of the hallway.

"I feel as if I haven't gotten a chance to speak to you all night." Hannibal said on approach.

Will grinned. He nudged his body closer to his friend's, enough to almost touch without trying.

"Yeah, I kind of got pulled in different directions all night."

Hannibal didn't respond right away, so they stood in complete silence. Will didn't know why now, all of a sudden, they were both being shy with each other.

It might have been contributed to not really speaking to each other since the graduation ceremony, awaiting possible physical contact between the two.

Will slowly touched Hannibal's arm and caressed it. By this time, the hallway had cleared out and the kitchen was empty. Will could hear his mother saying goodbye to people out in the living room. He looked up at Hannibal who had been staring at him the entire time, smiling faintly.

However, without notice, Will's father walked swiftly into the hallway, unaware of his son and his best friend's emerging closeness in the space.

"Hey boys!" Will's father gleefully shouted, halfway headed in the direction of his office at the end of the hallway, completely oblivious of the situation.

Both Will and Hannibal waved at him, not really responding verbally. Will rolled his eyes slightly and Hannibal smiled politely.

As soon as his father was out of sight, Will took his chance.

“Would you like to spend the night? We could watch a movie or two.” Will asked, grinning.

Hannibal grinned back as he shifted on his feet. “You don’t want to go out and celebrate?” He asked as a joke, knowing full well that his best friend had probably more than exceeded his max for social interaction for the day.

“Not tonight.” Will smirked. He started his way toward the stairs to his bedroom with Hannibal following closely behind.

Once they made it to the door to his room, Will felt Hannibal brush up against him slightly. He had to force himself to keep up his game; he really did love the way his friend felt up against his body, however, Will needed to continue his tease in order to confirm Hannibal’s true feelings.

They both entered the room and Hannibal sat on the bed. Will walked over to his desk and lingered a bit.

He wanted Hannibal to come over to him.

After a moment, Hannibal took the hint and slowly rose from the bed, taking his time walking across the room to join Will standing by his desk. Will smiled a bit, waiting impatiently for his best friend to come to him.

Hannibal finally met Will and stood close to him, less than an inch apart. Will looked up at Hannibal and smiled.

“You know you can kiss me if you want, Hannibal.” Will offered frankly with a coy smile.

Skipping an equally coy verbal response, Hannibal leaned forward and kissed his best friend. Will leaned into Hannibal’s body and wrapped both arms around his waist. He pulled Hannibal close to him and lost himself in a lingering, quite passionate kiss. More passionate than he had expected it to be.

He let Hannibal caress his body, feeling him everywhere he could, pushing him up against the edge of the desk to the point of almost sitting on top of it.

Will pressed up against Hannibal, who continued to drive his body back while increasing the rate at which he was rubbing his friend’s entire backside.

Will felt himself wanting to have sex with Hannibal again, but he had to force himself to think of the game he was trying to play. He couldn’t give into Hannibal; his best friend needed to know how he had suffered the entire year, thinking that Hannibal had used him for sex.

But, Hannibal feels so amazing...

Will felt himself getting hard—

“Hannibal.” Will gently pushed his friend away. He held onto his shirt, though, breathing heavily from the intensity of the kiss. He caressed Hannibal’s back, but had to avert his eyes to avoid getting swept up into his emotions again.

“I downloaded *Apéritif*.” Will said as he wiggled his body away from his best friend’s grasp. He turned around to grab his computer from his desk before walking over to the bed.

Oh my god. I’m not good at this...I need to keep it together...He thought to himself.

Hannibal lingered by the desk a minute longer before joining his friend on the bed. Will moved over slightly to give his friend some room. Hannibal sat down on the bed close to Will waiting for him to set up the movie.

Will turned slightly to look sideways at Hannibal. He could tell his friend was reeling from the kiss, but he kept up the tease.

“You can lie down if you want, Hannibal...”

Hannibal nodded before propping himself up against the headboard of the bed, half sitting up and half lying down. Will joined him, scooting close to his friend. He balanced the computer on his body and pressed play.

They laid on the bed together, into the wee hours of the morning, watching, and finally, after a whole movie duration of somewhat awkward sexual tension, laughing and cuddling.

“What happened after you made out the first time?” Beverly immediately asked after Will finished his story.

“It was a little weird after...but we brushed it off and moved in together over the summer…” Will was telling the whole truth, this time. But of course, the post-kiss was only “weird” because of the sex that had led up to it.

“So, when did you guys end up making out again?” Beverly added, caught up in her friend’s story again.

“At that party I mentioned.” Will answered, rolling his eyes.

Beverly laughed. “Oh yeah, when you two dorks ‘played’ truth or dare.” She motioned with air quotes around the word “played”, halfway insinuating that the kiss from the game was more serious than it was made out to be.

“I didn’t want to go...we were at this party Hannibal had managed to get me to go to after a month or two of living together…” Will began, rolling his eyes again, thinking about how stupid the situation at that party had been.

Part Twenty

Chapter Notes

Yeah for more minor characters !

Well, the party had been *more* than stupid. It was a colossal shit fest. Yet, nowhere near the drama associated with the third kiss (more on that later).

“Did you get super drunk again?” Beverly teased.

Will had to laugh at that even though the second kiss had made things even more complicated between himself and Hannibal. The complication stemmed from Hannibal’s then-boyfriend having been present during the fated “truth or dare”, witnessing firsthand how close his boyfriend was with his best friend.

“Ugh, I just have to explain it to you. But I need to build up the story again.” Will half grimaced and half grinned, which you wouldn’t think was possible, but Will had managed to perfect the expression over the years.

“Yes, I love it when you build up stories…” Beverly gleefully replied. She waited a bit before continuing, “so you mentioned before that during this second time, Hannibal had been seeing someone?” She asked, blissfully unaware of how much Will had hated Hannibal’s boyfriend when they first moved in together while living in New York.

“Uh yeah. He was dating some guy who also worked at Mount Sinai.” Will waved off the moment in history as if it were only a footnote and not another source of extreme tension between himself and his best friend.

Beverly grinned then winked. Will rolled his eyes again because he knew she was going to say something smart about Hannibal’s ex-boyfriend.

“You hated the guy because he was with Hannibal, right?” She nodded her head, already agreeing with her hypothesis.

Will sighed as he shuffled a bit in his seat. “*Yes*, Beverly. I couldn’t stand the guy.”

“Was he actually a terrible person or was it just being with Hannibal that did him in?”

Will huffed even louder, placing his hands on hips. He knew Beverly was going to give him a hard time for admitting the truth.

“I hated the guy because he was with Hannibal. Yes, you’re right.”

“Well, I’m actually *always* right, but thank you for acknowledging.” Beverly smirked.

“Well, the following summer, Hannibal and I had found an apartment in Brooklyn…” Will began, ignoring Beverly’s expression so he could get back to the story.

Will ran up the steps out of the subway. He was late meeting Hannibal at the Union Square Greenmarket from a new student meet-up organized by some of the doctoral students in the psychology department at Columbia.

He had almost skipped the meet-up; part of him just wanted to fly under the radar while at Columbia without having to really interact with anyone. However, Hannibal reminded him that he needed to be somewhat social with his fellow classmates in order to network for the future.

Do you want you go with me? Waiting until the last minute, Will almost forgot to ask his best friend if he wanted to go with him.

Isn’t it only for your cohort?

Well, some people are bringing their significant others, I guess... Will had responded, thinking that if others could bring their partners, then he could bring his best friend...but also NOT really realizing how the statement came off...or how it would look if people brought their partners, and he brought his “best” friend…

Oh, I didn’t realize I was your significant other now, Will. Hannibal answered back playfully, knowing that his friend’s last statement didn’t compute fully in his mind before saying it out loud.

Oh, haha...you know what I meant. People are bringing “plus ones”...wait…ugh...

Hannibal had laughed. *It’s all right. Unfortunately, I have to make a stop at the hospital before going to the farmer’s market.*

Okay, I’ll meet up with you there later.

Will glanced around a bit, trying to find his friend. It was a Saturday, and the market was bustling with a ton of people. He walked around until he found Hannibal studying basil plants at a fresh food stand.

Will grinned before approaching, until he realized that Hannibal wasn’t alone.

Ugh Donald is here too?

This past summer, Will, with the help of Hannibal, had moved everything he owned to an apartment they had found together in Brooklyn.

The move had been a great relationship test (as moving always is with someone you care about, even the best friend you secretly have feelings for, but won't say out loud), and through a couple of tense and stressful moments, Will and Hannibal had finally pulled their apartment together before Will needed to start focusing on grad school.

Everything was great. They had their apartment, made meals together, spent the weekends together, and Will even managed to get Hannibal to go on a hiking trip with him to upstate New York.

Everything seemed great, but only on the surface. The only real issue now was Hannibal's new boyfriend, Donald Sutcliffe, a fellow resident at Mount Sinai.

After they kissed each other at the graduation party, Will and Hannibal had continued their little game of unbearable sexual tension and tease. Well, Will kept it up, getting better with shouldering his true feelings, while trying to make his best friend as miserable as possible by denying him what he really wanted. Even though Will was only doing so to find out how much Hannibal really cared about him...

In the meantime, however, Hannibal came to the conclusion that the only way to really move on from Will was to do just that: move on. His friend appeared not to be interested in anything romantic and it hurt too much being close to Will and not getting what he truly wanted.

So, after a week or two, a few weeks before the end of the big move to Brooklyn, Hannibal had started seeing Donald on a regular basis.

And, of course, Will's relationship with Hannibal's boyfriend was extremely tensed. Will couldn't stand the guy because not only was he with his best friend, but Donald also wasn't too terrible of a person to have a legitimate reason to actively hate.

Actually, Donald was pretty nice to Will, which bothered him even more. Hannibal was fully aware of the tension between the two, but of course he didn't do anything about it. Part of him wanted to make Will jealous (oh whoops, these boys).

Will walked up to where his best friend and Donald were standing. They were both crouched over, looking at a few bushels of basil as if they were picking out housewares after getting married or something similarly overly gushing that made Will's stomach turn.

He noticed that Donald had said something that made Hannibal laugh, which made him even more irritated.

Ugh, keep it together, Graham! He shouted to himself in his head.

Not only was the scene sickening, but something else was also bothering him.

Lately, Will had been suffering from extreme headaches. Each day the headaches worsened, but he didn't delve into the details with Hannibal, thinking he wasn't drinking enough water and was possibly stressed about his first year in grad school.

However, that day, the headaches were almost unbearable. He had almost missed the subway stop to the market, confused about which route to take and when to get off on the subway when he had been to this particular market hundreds of times because it was Hannibal's favorite.

He felt his legs wobble a bit. He stopped walking to steady himself, but his body felt like it was going to tip over.

Will felt a gentle hand take a hold of his arm.

"Will, are you all right?" It was Donald, with Hannibal not too far behind.

Will wanted to yank his arm away. He couldn't stand how nice Donald was to him and he didn't feel like keeping up the charade of mutual niceness through his painful haze.

He felt Hannibal rub his back. "Will?" He asked, practically holding his friend up with one arm.

Will shook his head a little to try to reorient himself. He felt incredibly sick and wanted to lie down, but the market didn't have a suitable sitting area.

Hannibal and Donald guided him to a shady area outside of the market. Donald handed him some water, which Will reluctantly accepted. Both Hannibal and Donald looked at each other as if they were trying to diagnose a patient at their hospital.

"Will, we should probably take you to the hospital." Donald finally offered. He looked back at Hannibal, who only silently agreed.

Will shook his head again, this time more violently. He almost dropped the bottle of water Donald had just handed to him.

"No, I'm fine. I really haven't eaten all day." He managed to say, struggling a bit.

Hannibal and Donald looked at Will before looking back at each other again. Donald appeared extremely concerned, which caught Hannibal off guard a little.

Hannibal turned to face Will. "Why don't we go home early. You can rest and then we'll figure out if you need to go to the hospital." He offered.

Hannibal was concerned that Will's condition was more serious than not eating that day. His friend had mentioned a headache or two the last week and a half.

Will looked down at his feet to center his gravity. He himself was concerned that he was losing his mind at this point. He had never felt this sick before with the sudden onslaught of headaches. He also figured that maybe the sickness feeling was due to being upset about having to hang out with Donald instead of just his best friend that day.

Hannibal tried holding onto Will's arm, but he pulled it away gently. "Hannibal, I'm fine. I just needed to drink some water." Will took a huge swig from the water bottle before handing it back to Donald.

“Thanks.” He said curtly, not really looking at Donald, but he could see out of the corner of his eye that the guy was smiling at him.

Ugh, please stop smiling, jerk.

“There’s a craft stand down the way selling material for fishing lures, Will,” Donald started, “we should check it out.” He had said this mostly to Will while slightly turned to face Hannibal, smiling still, completely unaware of how much Will despised him for only going out with his best friend.

Shut up, asshole! Don’t act like we’re friends just because you know I like to fish, you, douchebag...

Will clenched his fists to keep from shouting his thoughts. “Yeah, sure that would be great.”

Donald lingered his smile and Will half grimaced and half grinned. Donald led the way toward the craft stand, as Hannibal hung back a bit to make sure that his friend was really okay.

He rubbed the back of Will’s neck, gently guiding him in the direction of the stand. “Are you sure you’re all right?”

Will looked up at Hannibal and smiled slightly. Truthfully, he felt like absolute shit. He wanted to go home, but he also didn’t want to leave Hannibal with his smiling asshat of a boyfriend, having a great time grinning and laughing with each other on a *fucking* nice, sunny, *fucking* Saturday while he went home to wallow in bed, feeling as if he were losing his sanity...

“Hannibal, I’m fine. Stop babying me.” He managed to say playfully through the wave of an oncoming headache.

Hannibal chuckled, which made Will smile even though he felt horrible. “I am overly protective when it comes to you.”

About an hour later...

After an hour or so of spending more time than really needed checking out the craft stand with the fishing equipment, the three of them finally made it back to Will and Hannibal’s apartment.

“Would you like to stay for dinner?” Hannibal asked Donald as soon as they reached their building.

Donald didn’t live too far away from them, actually a few blocks away. Will had noticed that Hannibal didn’t stay over at Donald’s apartment too often and vice versa. He mostly just

chalked it up to the fact that they had recently made their relationship official, and both were extremely busy.

He had no idea that maybe his best friend just like spending time with him more...you know, probably because he was still in love with him even though he was seeing someone else...

Donald looked at Will before answering Hannibal.

Why are you looking at me?? Will thought to himself.

“Sure, that sounds great actually.” Donald responded, letting Hannibal place a hand on his back to guide him into the apartment.

Will stepped in front of them to head inside first, not really caring whether his move was seen as rude or not. He really had had enough of hanging out with both Hannibal and Donald; he just wanted to lie down and sleep until tomorrow.

God, my head is killing me.

Will bolted for his bedroom once inside. “I think I’m going to lie down. You guys can eat without me.”

“Are you sure, Will?” Hannibal asked, his tone dripping with concern, enough to make Will more aggravated.

Will felt Hannibal caress his back, which stopped him in the middle of the hallway. He wondered to himself if Donald ever caught these small seemingly innocuous touches between himself and Hannibal.

“Yes, I’m sure. I’ll eat later. I really just want to lie down.” Will had only turned slightly to face Hannibal.

He could see out of the corner of his eye Donald lingering near the kitchen entry way, watching them with his arms crossed. He looked concerned, but for Will’s health.

Hannibal caught Will’s arm before he managed to pull away from him. “Okay, I can bring you something later, so you don’t have to get up.”

Will only nodded back before gently pulling his arm away to walk toward his bedroom. He opened the door, shuffled toward the bed before collapsing on top of the sheets.

His head was killing him at this point and knowing that Donald was hanging out in his apartment, having dinner with his best friend, made the headaches pulse even more.

Maybe the headaches will go away if I rest…

After a moment or two of silent thought, Will feel asleep, despite the constant throbbing in his head.

He had meant to get up after a few hours to spend time with Hannibal after he had dinner with his boyfriend, but his body fell into a deep slumber into the early morning.

Birds chirping woke him up, surprisingly. Will groaned as he glanced over at his bedside clock. It was five in the morning

Wow, I lost all sense of time while I was sleeping…

Will rubbed his eyes before noticing that a dinner plate nicely wrapped with plastic wrap was on top of the table next to his bed, adorned with a note from his best friend.

"Thought it was best to let you sleep a few hours. Enjoy. - H."

Will smiled as he laid back down on the bed with the note; he cherished the thought of Hannibal checking in on him, taking the time to hand write him a note. He thought for a split second about going over to Hannibal's bedroom to thank him, but the thought was immediately stomped on by possibly running into Donald.

Will turned over onto his side and grimaced. His stomach began to hurt from pains induced by the thought of his best friend sleeping with someone else. He kept turning with every horrible image of Donald laughing and cuddling with his best friend in bed until he was facing downward in his pillow.

He quietly shouted out a curse before forcing himself out of bed to take a shower.

I don't know why the two of them don't talk to each other. Most of this drama could have been avoided. Beverly thought to herself as Will took a break from the story. She thought against saying the thought out loud, considering how sensitive her friend was regarding the issue.

"So, what was wrong with you?" Beverly asked instead.

"Encephalitis. I had a viral infection." Will answered, shrugging slightly.

"Jesus, wow. That *sucks*." Beverly reached over the counter to take a sip out of her water.

Will nodded. "Hannibal's boyfriend had mentioned that there was a possibility that it was encephalitis, but we didn't really do anything about it until that party I ended up kissing Hannibal at..."

"What happened at the party?" Beverly asked, eyes wide. Will couldn't believe that his friend's eyes could get any bigger with curiousness.

"I passed out from a severe headache after the truth or dare game. It was miserable…"

Part Twenty - One

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The following weekend...

“How long will the party be tomorrow?" Will and Hannibal were walking home together from Prospect Park after attending an outdoor concert.

It was only the two of them this time; Donald had to work late at Mount Sinai, but Hannibal was planning to visit the hospital later to bring his boyfriend a change of clothes and a tooth brush. Will had been glad that he was given the time alone with Hannibal, EVEN THOUGH Hannibal spent more time with him than Donald...but to Will it didn’t really feel like it. He didn’t like sharing his best friend, even with his best friend’s boyfriend.

“Probably a few hours, but we could leave early if it’s boring.” Hannibal answered, smiling down at his best friend, who appeared agitated.

“*Is* Donald coming?” Will asked, half aware that his comment sounded a little envious, but also unaware of how his best friend felt about the entire situation.

Hannibal acted like he didn’t notice the jealous tone in his friend’s inquiry, yet he smirked a little, please inwardly that his best friend was jealous of his relationship.

“Yes. He has the night off finally.”

Will couldn’t prevent himself from rolling his eyes. “Well, I guess we all could go together.”

“Of course, that would be the most preferred option.” Hannibal replied, walking ahead of Will to look at some furniture in a storefront window.

Will slowed down a bit so he could watch his friend walk ahead of him, mesmerized by how sexy Hannibal’s backside looked in the afternoon glare.

“Hey! Watch where you’re going!” Without looking, Will bumped into an older woman on the sidewalk with her tiny dog while he was focused on thinking about Hannibal’s naked body instead of watching his step.

“Oh, sorry!” He answered, still not fully aware of his surroundings, looking mostly at Hannibal instead of the older woman.

“Will! Come look at this table. You could probably use it to store the materials you use to make your lures.” Hannibal was pointing toward the storefront, beaming at his friend.

Will smiled back before he ran a bit to catch up with his friend.

Later that night...

Hannibal casually sauntered into the lobby of Mount Sinai, using his employee badge to get past the security checkpoints before he made it into the neurology department, looking around for any sign of Donald. He lingered a bit, taking his time visiting with colleagues and a few patients before he found his boyfriend walking out of the lounge area reserved for the residents, looking very exhausted.

Hannibal smiled before reaching out to give Donald a hug. “Hope you’re not working too hard.”

Donald hugged him back but refrained from giving him a kiss. Usually at the hospital, Hannibal and Donald kept their relationship professional, so public displays of affection were limited to hugs.

Hannibal handed Donald a tote bag containing a change of fresh clothes and a toothbrush and toothpaste.

Donald smiled back before taking the bag. “Thank you. Wish I could visit longer, but I only have a few more minutes.”

Hannibal half shrugged with a grin. He hadn’t really planned on staying any longer anyway because he had promised to watch a movie with Will after visiting the hospital.

“That’s all right. I’ll see you most of the day and night tomorrow.” He replied.

Donald looked at his boyfriend intently before speaking. “Is Will coming to the party as well?” He asked, almost in the same jealous tone Will had questioned earlier about him.

Hannibal sighed mentally. As was mentioned before, part of him relished in the idea that his best friend was envious that he was with someone else, yet the jealously had extended to Donald’s side, which had become extremely annoying.

Lately, Donald had been asking if they could spend more time together, you know, because they’re dating and what not. However, Hannibal kept blowing him off to hang out with Will, citing his best friend’s upcoming hectic grad school schedule as the reason why he needed to spend most of his free time with Will this summer, instead of his boyfriend, before both he and Will were too busy to hang out.

After a while, Hannibal knew Donald wasn’t buying the excuse anymore, so it became incredibly frustrating having to deal with both a jealous best friend and a suspicious boyfriend.

“Yes. I managed to convince him.” Hannibal grinned slightly, attempting to ease the tension.

Donald didn’t smile back but frowned instead. Hannibal took the hint and rubbed his boyfriend’s arm, just enough to reassure him of their relationship.

“Would you like to spend the night at my place tomorrow night then? I feel as if we can’t get a free moment to ourselves…” Donald trailed off, attempting to drop another hint that Will was a smothering third wheel.

Donald had only been playing nice with Will because his was Hannibal’s best friend. But the three of them going basically everywhere together never gave Donald the chance to truly express his feelings toward Hannibal. He wanted to say and do more, but his boyfriend wasn’t available to do so.

“Will only knows the two of us here in New York, but I see your point…” Hannibal trailed off also, mimicking his boyfriend’s tone in order to show sympathy. He didn’t really feel sympathetic about the situation; he did like spending more time with Will and only liked Donald for the fun of it.

“I’ll stay over tomorrow.” Hannibal reached out again to give Donald a hug, which was timidly accepted.

“I’ll let you get back to work. See you tomorrow.” He said through the hug before giving Donald a quick kiss on the cheek before turning around to head out of the neurology department.

Hannibal looked behind himself and saw that Donald was blushing slightly from the kiss. He smiled and Donald smiled back, sending a quick wave. Hannibal waved back before disappearing down the hallway.

Before exiting the department doors, Hannibal’s demeanor changed. *I need to break up with him soon, he’s becoming a nuisance...*

The following night...

Will and Hannibal, along with Donald, had gone out for dinner before taking the subway to get to a party in SoHo. The entire time during dinner, Donald had been insufferably clingy, hanging onto Hannibal while they were eating and talking. Will had been so irritated with Donald’s behavior that he had stopped talking to both Hannibal and Donald, walked ahead of them on the way to the party.

He looked at news articles on his phone as listened to Donald and Hannibal laugh to each other and talk about the latest news at Mount Sinai.

Ugh, I wish they would fucking shut up.

“Hey, Will! Wait up.” Will heard Hannibal shout to him.

He was halfway down the street, not really paying attention to which way he was going. He was fuming with anger; he didn’t know how long he could stand his best friend being with

this jerk.

And to add to all the emotional distress, his neck started to stiffen, a preview of the severe headaches he had been suffering from lately. Will felt as if the headaches only really appeared when Donald was around, but truthfully, they appeared out of nowhere often. The last one almost led to a fainting episode, but he didn't tell Hannibal about it. He figured if he just relaxed, that the headaches would subside for a few hours.

"You passed the apartment." Will felt Hannibal gently grab his shoulder and squeeze it.

He let his best friend guide him to the correct address before wrapping an arm around his waist. Will looked up at Hannibal before looking over at Donald to see his reaction. Donald seemed unfazed, but he wasn't smiling like he usually was.

Yeah, Hannibal cares about me, asshole. Will thought to himself as he leaned into the half hug with Hannibal.

The three of them entered the building and walked up the steps to the third floor. As soon as they entered, Will was blown away by how nice the place looked. It belonged to one of the attendees Hannibal and Donald worked with at Mount Sinai.

"Let's see who's in the kitchen." Donald suggested, wrapping an arm around Hannibal's waist to lead him away from Will. Will followed slightly behind, trying to mask his anger toward Donald's move.

As they approached the kitchen, Will rolled his eyes almost immediately when he saw Frederick hanging out with a group of people near a counter. He hadn't seen Frederick since his first visit to New York over a year ago.

Hannibal never really mentioned him, so Will had figured they weren't that close anymore (if they were really close to begin with), so he was surprised to see Frederick at this party. But then again, Hannibal and Frederick ran in the same hoity toity crowd, so this night was going to be even more annoying than he had expected it to be.

Frederick noticed Will with a half-shocked, smug expression, grinning before making a beeline toward him, Hannibal, and Donald.

"Will! Look at how you've grown." Frederick smirked, walking straight toward Will, placing his uninvited hands on the younger one's shoulders.

"Oh *great*, Frederick's back." Beverly commented, rolling her eyes.

“Glad to see you’re still you, Frederick.” Will quipped back, incredibly irritated, however he masked his frustration well.

Frederick laughed, loudly. He hadn’t expected Will to be so snarky. Actually, he thought it was kind of cute. Frederick lingered his gaze a little, not being subtle with his thoughts until Hannibal noticed, stepping in between him and Will.

“Frederick.” He said, holding out a hand for his frenemy to shake.

Frederick slowly nodded at Hannibal, smirking. “Hannibal. When are you two going to have a party at your place? I’m *dying* to see it…” He replied, ending his sentence casually before taking a sip of his beer.

Hannibal shrugged. “Soon,” he wrapped a hand around Will’s waist again, “it’s really up to Will, though...”

Will leaned into Hannibal. “You know, grad school and what not.” He finished his best friend’s sentence with ease.

The entire time during this exchange, Donald had been left by himself on the periphery of the conversation, no one really acknowledging his presence. And no one continued noticing him as the party shifted out toward the living room.

Frederick led the way even though it wasn’t his apartment. He looked back at Hannibal. “Abel’s been asking about you lately, Hannibal. You should give him a call.”

Hannibal didn’t say anything back, indicating that he was above Frederick’s drabble. Frederick frowned before walking ahead a bit more. Will grinned at Hannibal’s response. Donald followed slightly behind.

“Okay, everyone! Quiet, quiet.” Frederick started, waving his arms around to get everyone in the space to pay attention to him. The party goers all stopped their conversations to listen.

“Join me over by the couch if you want to play Truth or Dare.” He offered, as everyone murmured about how either fun the idea seemed or how stupid the game was.

Frederick turned around to look at Will and Hannibal, who were still interlocked, arm and arm.

“Coming?” He asked, with a slight change in tone of voice to emphasize the question.

Hannibal looked down at Will and smiled. “Should be fun.”

Will sighed. “Ugh, fine.”

Everyone who wanted to play the game, gathered around the couch and Frederick found a hat to fill with little paper tabs with the words “TRUTH”, “DARE”, or “DRINK” written on them.

The game went a few rounds, with Frederick forcing people to either to admit a terrible secret about themselves, complete an asinine task, or drink a shot of tequila. Will was sitting on the couch with Hannibal, while Donald was sitting on the floor near the table next to Frederick.

By this time in the night, Will had been fine in terms of headaches. His neck was still stiff, but he didn't feel dizzy. Also, being so close to Hannibal on the couch was kind of comforting.

"Okay, your turn, Graham." Frederick pointed toward Will with his beer bottle, indicating that he should pick a truth or dare tab out of the hat.

Will rolled his eyes; he really didn't want to participate in the game. Hannibal leaned over to whisper in his ear.

"We'll leave in an hour or so, I promise." He placed a hand on Will's thigh and lightly caressed it. Will felt himself starting to blush. He flashed a look over at Donald, who was intently watching his boyfriend caress his friend.

"Choose please, while the game is still interesting." Frederick chimed in, watching the previous scene play out in front of him with annoyance written all over his face.

Will took his time taking a paper tab out of the hat. He unfolded it and it read "TRUTH".

Frederick laughed and Will made a face. He knew Frederick was going to try to get him to reveal some horrible salacious detail about himself.

"Have you ever…slept with a guy?" Frederick took little time trying to get Will to admit in front of Donald that he had slept with Hannibal more than once. Will knew Frederick was trying to cause unnecessary drama, but he wasn't buying it.

"I'll do a dare instead." Will abruptly offered.

Frederick huffed. "Can't change, answer the question or take a shot."

Will looked at Hannibal, who appeared as if he wasn't bothered by the question.

"Fine, I'll take a shot then." Will reached for the pre-made shots of tequila on the table. Frederick shot him a coy look, which bothered Will a bit. He grimaced before slurping the shot; it tasted like the same terrible tequila Frederick had gotten him to drink that night he got super drunk and tried to fight Abel and seduce his best friend.

"Okay, now you have to do a dare. We *can't* just skip you, Will." Frederick crossed his arms, triumphant that he had seemingly caught the upper hand in this stupid game they were all suckered into playing.

Will rolled his eyes. He figured the dare wouldn't be so bad considering he had dodged a dicey question to begin with.

Frederick took his time, basking in the attention. "I dare you...to make out with a guy. Or take two more shots."

Will looked around as everyone chuckled in response to the dare. The only guys in the circle he knew were Frederick, Hannibal, and Donald. Will didn't feel like kissing either Frederick or his silently sworn enemy Donald…but he couldn't kiss Hannibal.

Fuck…

"Anytime, William." Frederick sighed with a quick roll of the eyes.

Will didn't know what to do. His options were limited, and he didn't feel like drinking anymore. He sat nervously fidgeting on the couch, the staring eyes of everyone participating in the game were burning a million holes through his head.

After a moment or so of agonizing mental pain, Will felt Hannibal lean closer toward him. "You could kiss me if you want, Will." He whispered.

Will felt the core of his body warm up. He didn't revisit his previous concerns of avoiding any drama at the party because now all he could think about was the way Hannibal's lips felt up against his. He had really missed the feeling, actually.

So, with his emotions overriding his rationality, Will leaned toward Hannibal, pressing his lips against his best friend's. The kiss quickly turned into a five second make out session, almost as if the two had forgotten that a group of people were watching them suck on each other's faces.

"Whoa! That *was* hot."

"Are you sure you haven't been with a guy before?"

"Was the guy you slept with Hannibal? Sure seems like it."

Will pulled away from Hannibal a little to look his best friend sheepishly in the eye. Hannibal was looking down at him, also blushing a little from the kiss. Will wanted to continue, but he suddenly remembered that they weren't alone. He felt Hannibal rub his back a bit, as everyone in the circle kept commenting how hot the kiss was.

"Hey, Hannibal. Your boyfriend just left. Better go after him." Frederick grinned, before taking a sip out of his beer, pleased with the tire fire of a mess he helped to stoke.

Will felt Hannibal pull away from him. As the weight on the couch shifted, Will realized that Donald had probably left because he was upset with the kiss. He silently smirked to himself.

Hannibal's mine, sorry Donald...

Chapter End Notes

Oh Frederick...

Part Twenty - Two

...wait…what the fuck am I thinking?

Will lingered on the couch, cheeks flushed as Hannibal swiftly, yet elegantly, rushed out of the room.

Hannibal's mine, sorry Donald…

…why did I just think that?

The obsessive thought had involuntarily popped into his head, briefly reveling in the idea that he had possibly ruined Hannibal's relationship. Yet, he couldn't believe that he had given into his urges, kissing, actually making out, no, practically on the verge of fucking his best friend from a hot and heavy good ol' lip (and tongue) suck session in public.

Hannibal was supposed to be his best friend, not someone to lust over. Yet, the kiss felt so good...he had truly missed being close to Hannibal that way ever since they last had sex.

Even though Will had tried to tease Hannibal to the brink of torture, he really missed getting physical with his friend...

Will instantly became bothered by the dueling thoughts; he hadn't realized how much he yearned to be with Hannibal.

"You and Hannibal *are* ridiculous." Frederick added right after Hannibal got up to go look for Donald. He was still smirking at Will and the dramatic situation unfolding before his eyes.

Oh my god...I feel sick...

Will felt his head starting to thump, sharp flashes of pain radiated from his skull; his neck stiffen in response to an incoming severe headache, and it became too difficult to think straight.

Why did I do that? Why did I kiss Hannibal?

Will bent over slightly, crossing his arms around his waist. Nausea swept over his body, and he felt like throwing up.

Meanwhile…

Hannibal looked everywhere for Donald. He glanced around the kitchen before heading for the screen door that led to the outside of the apartment. He finally found his boyfriend

sulking outside in the back garden attached to the apartment, leaning up against the railing, facing the building. Donald had his arms crossed, he looked like he was on the brink of tears.

Hannibal took his time approaching. Even though he had been planning on breaking up with Donald in the near future, he didn't want to just yet. He was using his relationship with Donald to make Will jealous, and he needed to hold out on the relationship a little bit longer to get his best friend to come around to him. Donald had been fun in the meantime, but Hannibal didn't care about him like he did for Will, you know, the one he was actually in love with.

"Donald?" Hannibal asked slowly as he stopped a few feet in front of his fuming boyfriend.

Donald didn't look up at him right away. He only huffed a little, shuffling from side to side, sniffing a bit as if he had been crying all night. Hannibal waited until his boyfriend made the next move. They were standing silently in the urban garden, Hannibal facing Donald and Donald looking down at his feet.

"Have you ever slept with Will?" Donald asked after a minute or two of lingering awkward stillness, somehow getting to the point while also slowly dragging out the question. Hannibal's resolve never faltered, however; the only person who could make him flustered was Will.

Well, this is unpleasant...

Hannibal weighed his options. He could either be honest and end the relationship now, prematurely risking his plan of trying to be with Will or he could lie and continue the relationship as long as possible to get Will to confess his feelings for him.

He figured it was more of a possibility now; the kiss on the couch had been more intense than Hannibal had expected it to be. He could feel his best friend wanting to be with him, but was still hesitant about going all the way, again.

Hannibal settled on partly lying, but partly confessing a fraction of the truth. Donald wouldn't know the difference; Hannibal was a master at masking his inner feelings.

He sighed and fidgeted a bit to make his answer sound more genuine. "Once, a long time ago. Frederick knows about it, that's the only reason why he pressured Will into the game."

Donald stayed quiet, visibly upset by the admission from his boyfriend. Hannibal felt Donald's tension, preventing himself from sighing out loud about how possessive his boyfriend was being.

Honestly... Hannibal sighed in his head, reacting to how he perceived Donald's behavior to be, dramatic and annoying.

After a minute or so of long painful, awkward silence, Donald finally spoke up. "Just the one time?" He asked, almost buying Hannibal's lie.

Hannibal nodded, reaching out to gently stroke Donald's shoulder, a move that instantly settled his boyfriend. Hannibal was truly capable of felling anyone with his charms...however, he wished more of his charm had this effect on his best friend.

"Yes." Hannibal lied convincingly, now leaning up against the railing with Donald, facing the back of the apartment with him. He placed a soothing hand on the small of his boyfriend's back, which was leaned into with diminishing worry.

"You don't need to worry about Will, he's only my best friend."

Hannibal's body ached from the truth; it did feel like Will was always going to give him the run around in regards to a possible relationship, but Donald didn't know that and didn't need to know that. Hannibal needed him around to make Will jealous, that was basically his only purpose now, since his best friend so easily made out with him in public.

Donald sniffed a bit more before smiling at Hannibal. He took a hold of his boyfriend's hand and squeezed it.

"You would tell me if you had feelings for him, right? I know you said it was a long time ago, but I just need to know…" He asked, well almost begged, slowly, looking at Hannibal with extremely sad looking eyes.

Hannibal nodded again, still holding onto his resolve to appear sincere. He reached over with his other hand to cup Donald's face. He leaned in to give him a kiss...

Back inside the apartment...

"Hey, Will? Are you okay?"

Everyone, after Will lurched over in sickness, had huddled around the couch; a bunch of doctors in training trying to figure out what was going on with Hannibal's best friend.

"You look really sick…"

"Hey! William! Are you all right?" Will felt someone nudge his shoulder slightly. It was Frederick. Will tried shoving him away, but his body felt like it was fighting through quicksand.

Ugh…I can't see where I'm going...

"I'm...fine…" Will managed to mumble out, trying to get up from the couch, but his body couldn't balance, his vision was blurry, and he almost toppled over the table.

Will, through the painful haze of the viral infection he was suffering from, looked over at Frederick, who was trying to hold onto his arm to keep him from falling over, then down at

the ground as the lights went out.

Outside...

Before Donald could respond to the incoming kiss from Hannibal, one of the party goers burst out into the open space, searching around frantically.

“Hannibal! Your friend Will just fainted! We called an ambulance.”

Hannibal, without hesitation, let go of his boyfriend and sprinted back into the apartment with Donald not so far behind. They found Will lying on the couch where they had been playing truth or dare; Will was out cold with in ice pack wrapped in a towel on his forehead.

Frederick was standing near the furniture. He looked over at Hannibal as he approached the couch. He had his arm crossed, studying Will as if he were a specimen in a tube.

“Why didn’t you say anything about him being really sick? You shouldn’t have dragged him to a party, Hannibal.” Frederick huffed, acting as if he were concerned with Will’s safety more than Will’s best friend would be.

Hannibal ignored him as he crouched down to feel Will’s pulse. He looked down at his friend as he rubbed his arm gently. Donald walked up to the couch, crossing his arms in unison with Frederick as he examined Will from a standing position.

“From the way you were explaining his headaches to this, it sounds like he might have a viral infection, Hannibal.” Donald diagnosed, putting aside for the moment the issue of his boyfriend possibly having feelings for his best friend.

Hannibal only nodded as he continued to soothe an unconscious Will. “I agree. I probably should have taken him to the hospital earlier…”

“The ambulance is outside!” One of the partygoers shouted from the entry of the apartment.

In what felt like a second later, the paramedics invaded the party, strapping Will to a gurney before rolling him out to the emergency vehicle. Frederick, Hannibal, and Donald had been standing by the entire procedure, each expressing differing degrees of sternness at a fainted Will.

Frederick opened his mouth to berate Hannibal again. “No wonder Will is the way he is, he has you for a—”

“Shut up, Frederick.” Hannibal jabbed back, upset about Will, but extremely irritated with Frederick’s presence.

Frederick gawked, completely shocked that Hannibal had shut him up in front of everyone at the party. Donald smirked a bit from Hannibal's reply and the two of them jumped in the back in the ambulance with Will.

A few hours later...

Will slowly blinked his eyes. His memory was hazy, and he couldn't figure out where he was. The environment around him felt unfamiliar, so he knew he wasn't at home in his own bed. After a minute of trying to regain his full vision, Will heard the unmistakable sounds of hospital machines monitoring a patient's vitals, his vitals.

Did I pass out? He wondered to himself, staring at the machine as if it were an alien object from outer space. He rubbed his head, realizing that his arm was hooked up to an IV drip as he tried to move around a little more.

"Will?" Will heard his name uttered by an exhausted sounding voice belonging to Hannibal. He turned his somewhat stiff neck to face his best friend, who was sitting next to his bed, leaning over to caress the upper half of his body.

"Hannibal?" Will sat up in the bed, trying to understand what was going on. His mind flashed back to images of the party a few hours ago...playing truth or dare...and kissing Hannibal. He fell back onto the bed, groaning in pain.

Fuck…I forgot that I made out with Hannibal…

Hannibal scooted his chair closer to his friend's bed so he could touch Will's thigh. Without really thinking again, letting his emotions run his actions, Will looked down and took a hold of his friend's hand, not realizing how the scene looked to an outsider.

"You had a bout with encephalitis caused by a viral infection. I'm sorry I didn't react earlier." Hannibal said, sounding very concerned for Will's health.

Will noticed the tone in his friend's voice and smiled as best as he could. He squeezed Hannibal's hand again as he groaned out another achy feeling of residual pain.

Hannibal watched his friend. Will was facing forward now, but he could see Hannibal watching him out of the corner of his eye.

"I knew I was sick, but I didn't think I was *that* sick…fuck…" Will sighed, using his other hand to rub the temple on the side of his head. He turned his neck slightly to look Hannibal in the eye.

Hannibal smiled at him, caressing his friend's hand. "I'm just glad you seem better…"

They both stayed in this position, Hannibal still lightly caressing his friend's hand and Will meekly looking back at him.

After a minute or so of comfortable silence, the door creaked open and Donald appeared in the room. Both Hannibal and Will separated from each other quickly, Hannibal appeared unfazed by the intrusion, but Will blushed like crazy, thinking back to the kiss from a few hours ago.

Donald walked around the bed to where Hannibal was sitting and wrapped an arm around his boyfriend's shoulders. Will had to turn his head slightly away from the scene in order to prevent either Hannibal or Donald from seeing him grimace.

God, I fucking hate this guy… Will angrily thought to himself.

"How are you feeling, Will? You look recovered...we were all worried…" Donald started, sitting on the edge of the bed to look at Will.

Will felt the bed move a bit from the weight change and sighed. "Better…" He murmured back to Donald.

"Well, I just spoke with the attendee on call. He said we can take Will back to your apartment after we sign the discharge papers." Donald added, unaware of Will's resentment toward him.

"That's great." Hannibal commented, rubbing Will's back.

Hannibal noticed, out of the corner of his eye, that Donald was watching him touch Will; he didn't care however. His friend just went through an ordeal and the whole love triangle thing needed to stay on the back burner. Also, Hannibal didn't really care how Donald felt right now, he only cared about Will's health and state of mind.

Will felt Hannibal caressing his back and knew, based on the scene from the truth or dare episode, that the back rub was probably bothering Donald. He also didn't care; even though he was still confused about his feelings toward his best friend, Hannibal was truly his and no one else's.

"I ended up recovering pretty quickly." Will concluded the story about the second kiss, leaving out the crucial details like struggling with his feelings for his best friend.

"Well, I'm glad that you did...did you and Donald stay mortal enemies?" Beverly commented, cutting to the chase on the tension between Hannibal's boyfriend at the time and her friend.

Will rolled his eyes as he turned his phone back on, remembering that Molly was supposed to call him a little later.

“No, in fact Hannibal broke up with the guy after the third kiss we shared.”

Beverly playfully sighed as she took a sip of her water. “Oh, I wonder why?” She said sarcastically, implying that of course making out with your best friend while being with someone else would lead to an inevitable break up.

She still didn’t know that the third kiss had been super intense, basically leading to sex if Donald hadn’t blown up Hannibal’s phone...(actually, Will couldn’t remember how intense the kiss was, so I have the pleasure of clueing you in on the details later ;)).

Before Will could respond, his phone buzzed again. It was the texting thread with Brian and Jimmy.

Jimmy: will we should come over to your place early to set up the bar

Brian: jimmy only wants to come over early so he can mix himself some pre-game cocktails

“Who’s that?” Beverly asked, straining her neck to see who was texting Will.

Will sighed. “It’s just Jimmy and Brian again. They want to come over early for the party…”

Beverly clapped her hands together excitedly. “Good idea!”

Will: beverly agrees with you guys coming over early :p

Brian: bev! Yes! Mini pre-game

Jimmy: Hi beverly !

Brian: oh yeah, tell her i said hi

Jimmy: I said hi too !

Will chuckled. “They both say hi and want to have a mini-pre-game party.”

Beverly laughed. Will thought about how nice the laugh was; Beverly really was a great person inside and out.

Beverly scooted her bar stool closer to Will. “Okay, now let’s get to this third kiss.” She looked ever eager to hear the juicy details of this particular kiss.

She knew she shouldn’t encourage Will’s hesitancy to do the right thing, but her friend’s stories were so good. She figured Will would finally come around and come clean to everyone involved…she hoped anyway…

“Okay, so a few weeks go by, Hannibal’s still seeing that guy, like I said, and some of my fellow classmates were having a party to celebrate the beginning of the program…” Will began.

Part Twenty - Three

Chapter Notes

> Thank you so much for everyone reading and commenting on this story -- your feedback is the basis for my motivation to keep this story going.
>
> Love ya guys !
>
> --lady_slice

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A few weeks later...

…aw…

...ahh…

...ngh…aw…

...you and Hannibal are ridiculous…

…awwww…

I think about you all the time…

Well, I hope only good thoughts…

Wouldn't you like to know?

...ngh…

Will, I wouldn't say everything that I've ever said to you before we were intimate if I didn't care about you…

...ahh...ngh...

What, Hannibal? All of a sudden you're not interested?

Will shot up in his bed, drenched in sweat, panting heavily from a nightmare he could barely piece together. He looked around the room, head feeling groggy, making sure he was still in his bedroom.

...I think I had a terrible nightmare…

After a minute or two of attempting to regain complete consciousness, Will slumped downward into his bed, letting his head hit his pillow hard. He shuffled a bit in the sheets, breathing heavy from whatever terrors were present in his nightmare, until he slowly sat up again. He swung his legs from out underneath the sheets and bent over, hands clenched together on top of his knees.

I should change my clothes…

Will rose from the bed, dragging his feet toward his dresser. He found a fresh t-shirt and pair of boxers, changing out of his sweaty clothes into the fresh ones before dragging his feet back to his bed. He fell over sideways and laid face down, still breathing heavy from whatever his mind had manufactured in his sleep.

This was the first time in a while since he had had a nightmare like this, waking up soaked in sweat. He figured he was having a mental reaction to starting grad school soon; he had been stressed out about the program, a little nervous that he might fail flat on his face.

The one thing that brought him peace to mind, however, (and a bit ironic) was a time during his first visit to New York, wondering to himself if someone like Hannibal would ever be in a relationship with someone like him and Hannibal reassuring that he had cared about him by wanting him to pursue grad school and possibly move in together…

So, I'm thinking about going to grad school after college.

I think you should, you would do well.

...I'm looking at schools in New York...along with others around the country, of course…

Well, if you get into school in New York, we should move in together...if you want to that is…

Will groaned. At the time, he had desperately wanted to be in a relationship with his best friend; that entire visit before they had "broken up," before Will had found out about Abel, had been amazing.

But now, because of his stubbornness and confusing feelings directed toward his friend, Hannibal was with someone else, and he was left on the sidelines to watch the whole relationship play out.

He laid on the bed, sulking in agonizing thought about the position he had found himself in. Will slapped his forehead with both hands as he thought about kissing Hannibal at that party a few weeks ago.

Ugh…well...at least I'm feeling almost myself again…

After being rushed to the hospital that night, with Hannibal and Donald in tow, the doctor had explained to Will, once he recovered consciousness, that the viral infection that had caused the encephalitis wasn't severe enough to keep him in the hospital overnight. He was given an antiviral drip for a few more hours before Hannibal and Donald were given the okay to take him home.

Will remembered how a little awkward the car ride home had been. He was propped up in the backseat while Hannibal was sitting on the passenger side in the front and Donald was driving, trying to ease the tension by making a series of extremely corny jokes and/or small talk. Hannibal responded to him from time to time, but Will wasn't having it; he was so over seeing Donald around him and his best friend.

Will sat up in bed again before glancing over at the bedside clock. It was nine in the morning on a Saturday. Will thought about sleeping in a little bit longer but was afraid that his anxiousness would sweep him back into a nightmare.

He slowly got out of the bed again and headed for the door. He took his time entering the hallway, cautious of possibly running into Donald. He wasn't sure if he was in their apartment; sometimes Donald slept over on the weekends and now post-truth or dare kiss, the sleepovers had become more frequent.

Will looked down one end of the hallway then at the opposite end, taking the time to wait a minute or two to see if either Hannibal or Donald would exit Hannibal's bedroom. Will waited, but no one appeared, so he headed toward the kitchen.

As he walked in the kitchen, he observed Hannibal standing by the stove making breakfast. Will watched his friend turn around after he had entered and smile at him as Will rummaged through the cabinet to find a bowl to pour cereal in.

After the kiss, as you probably already guessed, both Hannibal and Will had been acting weird around each other. During Will's brief recovery, Hannibal had been constantly by his side, while also avoiding talk about the intensity of the kiss.

After Will's recovery, Hannibal started to pull away and Will had noticed. He couldn't lie to himself anymore that it was bothering him; he missed hanging out with his best friend and the distance was maddening.

Will thought about bringing up the idea of going to a social gathering together hosted by some of his fellow classmates. He figured it would be nice if just the two of them attended; his classmates would meet, arguably, the most important person in his life and Hannibal would help him feel less anxious about meeting more people in the program.

He waited for Hannibal to join him at the table. He watched his best friend plate a dish for himself, not preparing a second dish, possibly indicating that Donald was either not in the apartment or sleeping in in Hannibal's bedroom.

God, I hope he's not here…

Hannibal turned around and walked toward the kitchen table, sitting down at the opposite end of Will. Will smiled at him and he smiled back but didn't say anything; Hannibal only proceeded to place a napkin on his lap before turning on his tablet to read the news while he ate.

"So, some people in my cohort want to host a pre-program party this weekend…" Will shuffled in his chair, furtively looking at Hannibal then back down at his bowl, pushing the

soggy cereal around with his spoon.

Hannibal glanced away slightly from his tablet before returning to the article he was in the middle of reading.

“Are you planning to attend?”

Will was kind of taken aback about how passive Hannibal was being this morning. Was the kiss really that detrimental? He knew Donald had been giving Hannibal a hard time about it, but it was just for fun…

...it was just for fun…

...wasn’t it…? Will asked himself mostly.

He had thought he had Hannibal wrapped around his finger; he knew his best friend would say or do anything for him, but this morning he was cold and distant, more so than the last few weeks.

Will felt uneasy, similar to a feeling he had had once when he and Hannibal started talking again, afraid to hear that his best friend was in love with someone…

“I think I might...why not…?” Will tried to make his response sound like a joke, but it fell flat, and Hannibal didn’t even flinch as he only nodded back in response.

“I was also thinking…” Will began, taking his time, “that maybe you and I could go together…just the two of us...we haven’t really been hanging out lately…” He waited to see Hannibal’s reaction, looking down at his bowl of cereal again.

Hannibal took a bite out of his toast before answering. “Sure, why not?” Then went back to reading on his tablet.

Will almost jerked in his seat; Hannibal was being extremely weird. His best friend said nothing else as they finished eating breakfast.

Will thought it was probably best not to press the issue; he had agreed to go, so maybe he could mention something to Hannibal later about his behavior.

After a minute of silent reading, Hannibal got up from the table and cleaned his dish. He turned around and leaned up against the counter, eyeing Will.

“I’m going to run errands today, so I’ll probably be gone most of the day before dinner.”

Will sat back in his chair and interlocked his hands together on top of his knees before he replied. “Could I go with you? I mean...unless you want to be alone today….”

He fidgeted as he waited for Hannibal to respond. He looked down at his hands, feeling anxious.

“Sure. I’m leaving in about an hour.” Hannibal replied before exiting the kitchen without any further comment.

Will watched his friend depart the kitchen.

Is he upset with me?

Earlier that morning…

Hannibal rose out of his bed, stretching a bit before looking at his bedside clock. It was eight in the morning on a nice Saturday, a day off from the hospital.

He swung his legs out from underneath the sheets before looking through messages on his phone. He had received a few emails about invitations to various social functions, a few messages from people he worked with at Mount Sinai, and a couple messages from Donald. He rolled his eyes.

Donald: Visit me at Mount Sinai when you get a chance.

Hannibal typed out a reply before putting his phone on silent. He figured he could see Donald later in the day after running a few errands around the city. He thought about checking in on Will to see how his best friend was feeling today but stopped himself.

Lately, Hannibal had been cautious with how he interacted with Will; Donald had been acting more clingy as a result of the kiss. The night at the hospital, while waiting for Will to regain consciousness, Hannibal had decided that he should keep his relationship with Donald for the time being to see how Will really felt about him. He knew he was being a tad manipulative, but so was his best friend. They couldn’t even reach a place of communication to discuss how they felt about another because, and you guessed it, they were both afraid of admitting so.

Hannibal got out of his bed and headed toward the kitchen. Once he entered the kitchen, he proceeded to find the necessary ingredients to cook his usual weekend breakfast, which consisted of avocado toast with an egg on top and plain yogurt mixed with an assortment of berries.

He busied himself with preparing his meal, thinking about the best way to continue giving Will the cold shoulder without pushing his best friend away.

A few weeks ago after the hospital visit, Hannibal had been thankful that Will had recovered quickly from his viral infection, making sure that his best friend had everything he needed the few days he stayed in to rest after being in the hospital almost all night.

After that, Hannibal started to pull away, noticing that the move had bothered his friend, but Will never mentioned anything. His friend only mimicked how Hannibal was behaving

toward him, but Hannibal had figured the tense dance the two were playing would get to a certain point, at which Will would try to reach out to him.

He knew Will felt something for him, but was afraid to admit so. He would get his friend to come to him and then he planned to break up with Donald soon after.

Hannibal was facing the stove frying his two eggs for his toast when he heard footsteps approach the entry to the kitchen. He turned around to greet Will with a smile and lingered a bit to watch his friend rifle through the cabinets looking for a bowl to pour cereal in. He smirked to himself before returning to plate his breakfast.

He took his time putting the final touches on his meal before joining his best friend at the kitchen table. As he reached the table, he noticed that Will was fidgeting a bit in his chair, as if he were thinking about the best possible thing to say in their now tense post-truth-or-dare-kiss relationship.

As he sat down, Will smiled at him and he smiled back, but only doing so to ease the tension between the two. He was going to keep the charade going as long as possible until Will broke his resolve and confessed his feelings.

Hannibal simply placed a napkin on his thigh, reached for the tablet he usually kept on the kitchen table for reading the news in morning, and ignored Will for a while as he scrolled through an article.

He saw out of the corner of his eye that his friend was looking at him, well really glancing from now and then, still acting as if he really wanted to speak to him. Hannibal thought it was cute, but to a certain point, he really just wanted Will to be straightforward with him about their relationship.

“So, some people in my cohort want to host a pre-program party this weekend…” Will shuffled in his chair, furtively looking at Hannibal then back down at his bowl, pushing the soggy cereal around with his spoon.

Hannibal glanced away slightly from his tablet before returning to the article he was in the middle of reading.

“Are you planning to attend?” He smirked to himself, thinking that his plan was actually working; Will seemed to be slighted by not seeing his best friend every waking moment of the day like he used to.

As he concluded his reply, out of the corner of his eye again, he saw that Will looked a little shocked by the abruptness of his answer. However, he remained resolved.

“I think I might...why not…?” Will continued, sounding as if he was trying to play off the tension emanating from across the table. Hannibal only remained unflinching, which seem to rattle Will a little more. Hannibal only nodded in response as he watched his friend searching him for any further acknowledgement of his statement.

“I was also thinking…” Will began, taking his time, “that maybe you and I could go together….just the two of us...we haven’t really been hanging out lately…” He waited to see Hannibal’s reaction.

Hannibal took a bite out of his toast before answering. “Sure, why not?” Then went back to reading on his tablet.

What a great opportunity...Hannibal thought to himself.

The two of them hadn’t really spent any time together, so going to this party would give them a chance to get away from Donald and possibly get close enough to express how they felt about each other. Hannibal thought about how he could use the party to get Will to confess his true feelings toward him.

Without addressing his friend any further, Hannibal got up from the table and cleaned his dish. He turned around steadily, leaned up against the counter, and eyed Will, taking his time to appear genuine.

“I’m going to run errands today, so I’ll probably be gone most of the day before dinner.”

Hannibal figured that Will would want to come along, so while they were running errands, Hannibal could gauge their closeness and possibly predict at the party how Will would act around him. They had been touchy and close before, long before they started having sex, but any sign of closeness brought on by Will gave Hannibal hope that his best friend might still have feelings for him.

“Could I go with you? I mean...unless you want to be alone today…” Will was sitting back in his chair, interlocking his hands together on top of his knees. Hannibal had to prevent himself from smiling at how cute his friend looked with struggling with how to approach this situation.

“Sure. I’m leaving in about an hour.” Hannibal replied before exiting the kitchen without any further comment. He figured the move would jolt Will even more, bringing his friend closer to him and possibly providing the basis for them to get to the heart of their feelings.

He left the entry to the kitchen and made a beeline for his room, smirking to himself.

Your move, Will...

Chapter End Notes

...these boys...

Part Twenty - Four

About an hour later…

Will sat on the bed in his room, sulking over the exchange he had just had with Hannibal in the kitchen about an hour ago.

Why would he be upset with me? The kiss was practically his idea…

Will fell back onto his bed; he rolled to his side, languishing in thought about how his best friend was treating him.

I'll take it easy on him...maybe he and Donald are fighting?

Will perked up at the thought.

...oh god, I hope so...

A soft knock penetrated through the bedroom door. "Will? Are you ready to leave?" It was Hannibal, in a firm, yet gentle voice. Will couldn't tell whether his friend was annoyed with him.

However, he sprang up from the bed and excitedly threw open the door. Hannibal was leaning up against the doorframe, his face was expressionless.

"Yes! Let's go." Will charged in front of Hannibal through the apartment to the door leading to the outside. He felt his friend following him closely from behind.

Once they walked down the steps to the sidewalk, Will waited a bit for Hannibal to catch up...almost, almost taking a playful hold of his best friend's arm…ALMOST...

Yet, he decided against it; maybe he could get Hannibal to warm up to him again by being "cute". Will knew his best friend was easily susceptible to his charms based on their relationship in the past; every little quirk in Will's personality was cute, to some extent. So, he settled on laying on the charm as much as possible without being annoying.

There was an unintended fine line that Will had managed to perfect with Hannibal; Will was actually unaware of this, mostly because Hannibal thought his younger friend was being cute all the time, especially when Will had his jealous moments.

And of course, it hadn't dawned on Will that the balance in their relationship had shifted once again: Hannibal appearing elusive, acting as if he were someone who would never bother with someone like Will. But in fact, Will was someone Hannibal was more than willing to spend the time with, someone who he had been in love with since before they started having sex…

For Will, his role felt a bit insecure, yet he was gaining a little more confidence with his relationship with his best friend. Almost gone were the days when Will had teased Hannibal with the possibility of a sexual relationship (remember when they had sex after the fight with Tobias and Franklyn?...yeah me too ;)) and almost back were the days when the two friends had flirted with each other "innocently"...you know way before they started fucking, to put it bluntly.

However, the two were extremely incapable at getting to a place where they could openly discuss their feelings for one another without hurting each other. Basically, this...misunderstanding, we'll call it...provided further complicity to a relationship that would be ever more complicated in the years to come. Will and Hannibal wouldn't really start to communicate better until they…(actually, I'm going to keep that a secret :p)...

For now, Will and Hannibal were ever distant, yet so close. The sexual tension between the two was palpable, but Will mistook it for Hannibal being angry with him (because of the kiss) and Hannibal was playing mind games with his love interest (because of the kiss).

While they rode the subway to Soho, Will was mostly gabbing about possibly adopting a dog, with Hannibal only really replying by nodding or chiming in with one- or two-word replies. After they reached their stop, Hannibal and Will walked around the neighborhood, looking at the different art galleries and clothing boutiques that lined the street.

Will was still talking, mostly filling the silence himself, but from time to time he would smile at his friend or playfully bump into him to make sure he was still responsive.

Hannibal gave in, finally, and played back...it seemed as if his plan was working...

Will's phone vibrated loudly with a call from Molly. Beverly jerked a bit in her seat, the phone call bringing her back to reality, and Will almost yelped from Beverly's sudden movement along with the abruptness of the phone call.

"It's Molly." Will assured Beverly, who was holding her chest where her heart would be, breathing heavy from being startled by the call. She was a little annoyed with herself that she had been so engrossed in her friend's story that a something as simple as a phone call had surprised her.

She nodded back at Will as he stood up to take the phone conversation outside. "Molly?" Will answered, once he reached the patio to the pub.

"...dinner this Friday sounds great...going out is fine with me...okay I'll call you later… bye…" Will hung up the phone before leaning up against the side of the building.

How was he going to tackle both Hannibal and Molly next weekend?

Retelling his past with Hannibal to Beverly had been difficult; reaching the part in the story about living in New York caught Will up in feelings he had forgotten he had once had...desires that he had managed to somewhat bury from time to time since the fight with Hannibal a year ago.

But, as was mentioned before, the grave of past feelings and desires would be dredged up with little things and moments that constantly reminded him of his best friend and now rehashing their torrid past was pushing those feelings back to the surface.

...we're just friends now…nothing more... He repeated to himself before re-entering the pub.

Will took his time settling back into his seat, he looked at Beverly who appeared a little concerned for some reason...well good reason.

"Molly just wanted to know if I wanted to get dinner on Friday or Saturday." Will assured his friend again that the phone call had been tame.

Beverly sighed before taking a sip of her water. Will tugged at his shirt collar a bit as if he had trouble breathing before continuing the story…

About an hour later...

As Will poked at his best friend for dragging him into an antique furniture store just to browse, Hannibal stopped in front of a storefront that was displaying thrift store items. Hannibal had noticed out of the corner of his eye, although he had almost missed it, having been mesmerized by the Will's dazzling smile, a refurbished tackle box sitting in the forefront of the display.

"Oh, Will. Look at this." Hannibal pointed, gently using one hand to guide his friend in the direction of the display.

Will leaned forward closer to see what Hannibal was referring to in the storefront window. As he leaned, he felt his best friend press up against his body slightly, just enough for him to notice, but not enough to make a big deal about it.

"Which one?" Will asked, focused on how close Hannibal's body was to his backside. He felt Hannibal place a hand on his arm and slowly rub it up and down. He pointed to the knickknack in the far-left corner.

"That one." He whispered into Will's ear.

Will shuddered a bit, trying not to blush, but he couldn't help it. He felt Hannibal lean into his body more, the rubbing on his arm slowing down with intensity…

"...ah...uh…." Will stammered, closing his eyes a bit, almost imagining what had been like being with Hannibal the last time they had sex.

Suddenly, before his thoughts could go any further, Hannibal pulled away and headed toward the entrance of the store.

"Let's go inside and take a closer look." He said, turning his head back slightly just to give Will a small teasing smile.

Will gulped a bit before gathering himself. "...sure…" He replied, smoothing out imaginary ruffles on his otherwise nicely pressed button-down (Hannibal took care of most of the laundry, but Will helped from time to time).

Will followed his friend inside and made a hurried beeline toward the tackle box. Once he reached the item, he noticed that Hannibal was watching him eyeing the box; he was amused with his younger friend's eagerness, seemingly in the tackle box, when Will was trying to get away from Hannibal as quickly as possible so his friend wouldn't see him blush.

Will bent over slightly to look at the box, taking the time to examine how useful it might be during a fishing trip, while also fully aware that his best friend was watching him. Hannibal was leaning on one leg, arms crossed, grinning.

Fuck... Will thought. He didn't know why he had thought that...maybe he was still thinking about how close they had been outside when Hannibal first pointed out the tackle box.

Or maybe Will's subconscious was trying to tell him that he was very much attracted to how his friend carried himself with ease and grace, looking very sexy as he grinned, eyes directly focused on Will.

Will shook his head to snap back. "I think I might get this." He said, after looking at the price tag and deciding that it wasn't too much to spend on a new tackle box. He needed a new one anyway.

Hannibal uncrossed his arms and placed his hands on his hips. The movement tighten his shirt around his waist, revealing how fit he was underneath.

Fuck... Will thought again.

Hannibal smirked. "You should, you deserve it." He replied, fully aware that Will had been half staring at him while also glancing at the box.

Will picked up the box and brushed past his friend. Their legs grazed each other which almost caused Will to drop his find.

Oh my god...keep it together...

He knew Hannibal was watching him again as he walked up to the counter. "I'll wait for you over here." Hannibal answered, lingering a bit before training his eyes on some expensive object.

Will walked up to the owner of the thrift store, who was standing behind a counter reading a book.

“Hi, I would like to buy this.” Will said to the owner, placing the tackle box on the counter for her to ring up the item.

The owner smiled at him as she took the tackle box to find the price tag. “So, you like to fish, I presume?”

Will half smiled. He hated making small talk with strangers, but at least she was asking him a relevant question. Also, he could rely on Hannibal to rescue him from a long-drawn-out conversation if necessary. Even though they were being weird with each other—a tension encapsulated with the sexually charged moment outside by the storefront—he knew his best friend would help him out.

“Yes...er...people who know me best would say I was obsessed.” Will quipped.

The owner smiled at him again, mostly because he sounded super cute when he had answered her. She rang up the tackle box, found a nice store box to put it in, and handed it back over to Will.

“Thank you for stopping by,” she handed him a card with information about her store on it, “come back whenever. My husband has a few things in the back he stores for fishing equipment.”

Will took the card with a faint smile. “Sure, that sounds great.”

“Oh, by the way, you and your boyfriend are *very* cute.” She added with a genuine grin.

Will looked back at Hannibal, who was bent over looking at silverware in a glass case. He glanced back at the owner before looking down at his nicely wrapped tackle box. He could have corrected her…but in a split second he decided not to.

“Thanks.” He replied meekly, blushing a little. He started to turn around to head back toward Hannibal.

“Have a nice day!” Will said behind himself to the owner.

She waved bye at him as he caught up with Hannibal. Hannibal offered to carry his box, and Will said something funny which prompted a smile from his best friend. Will grinned as they walked out of the store together, happy that maybe Hannibal wasn’t upset with him anymore.

Hannibal tried to hold his resolve, but Will was being so adorable, so he laughed at the thing Will had joked about.

Also, he had happened to overhear his friend’s conversation with the owner of the store...

Later that weekend...

Will and Hannibal took the subway to get to the party. Earlier, Will had noticed that Hannibal hadn't really mentioned Donald the entire day; he wanted to ask to see if they were having problems, but he also didn't want to talk about Donald. Tonight was his night with his best friend, so he dropped the thought. He was over Donald and Hannibal was his, despite their own issues.

After getting off the subway, they walked down the street until they reached the apartment. Due to the nice weather, some people were hanging out on the porch. Will said hi to those he knew before introducing Hannibal.

After some small talk, which Hannibal was better at, they walked inside the apartment and found a few people that Will knew from a few get-togethers over the summer. He introduced them to Hannibal, Hannibal talked about what he did for a living, along with how he found time to indulge in his hobbies, and everyone "oooed" and "awwwed" with every detail.

Someone offered the two a couple of beers which was accepted, and the group continued their conversation in the kitchen. Everyone talked mostly about any possible difficulty of their upcoming program; what they did prior to the program; and much they liked or hated New York.

After a while, Will began to loosen up a little more; having Hannibal near was a great comfort totem to ease himself into conversation with people he otherwise would have ignored. Hannibal was standing close to him; from time to time, he felt his best friend place a hand on the small of his back or wrap an arm around his shoulders.

Will didn't pull away. Instead, he leaned into the embrace, laughing at whatever Hannibal joked about. Everyone else laughed, but Will laughed the loudest (and possibly the cutest, according to Hannibal).

Inevitably, it came to a certain point at which Hannibal and Will started to have too much fun. Every drink offered to them was welcomed heartily which prompted more touching and more coy laughs. After about an hour or so hanging out with people in the kitchen, Hannibal excused himself to take a phone call. Will grimaced because he knew the phone call was from Donald.

He was left standing in the kitchen with a few of his classmates as Hannibal left without a word.

What the fuck…?

Everyone continued the conversation around him as Will thought about how much he hated Donald. He hadn't detected, until the question was asked, that one of his classmates was trying to make eye contact.

“So is Hannibal your boyfriend?” Will’s classmate asked him, genuinely curious about her classmate’s relationship with the hot Scandinavian guy who had escorted him to the party.

Will chuckled nervously as he ran a hand through his hair, thinking back to the shop owner in SoHo.

Do we really look like we’re dating?

“Um no....we’re just best friends.” He answered, blushing.

“Oh...sorry…sorry for presuming…” She apologized, looking at her beer can before looking up at Will.

“Oh no, it’s okay. We’ve been getting that a lot lately.” He laughed again, which made his classmate smile just a little.

After a minute or so of engaging in small talk with his classmates, Will realized that Hannibal was still out talking on the phone. He waited a bit, feeling a noticeable buzz from the round of drinks. He knew he needed to slow down, possibly look for the bathroom to reorient himself before rejoining the conversation. He decided he didn’t need to worry about Donald; Hannibal was here at the party and not with him.

Hannibal can find me if he wants to… Will drunkenly thought to himself.

He stumbled down the hallway, the few drinks he had consumed prior sneaking up on him while glancing from side to side to search for the bathroom. He saw someone waiting outside a door and figured that that was the door to the bedroom. He staggered his way over after the person walked into the bathroom when it became vacant.

He waited a bit, pulling out his phone to text his friend, but knew Hannibal would come find him...

A few minutes later...

Hannibal found Will hanging out by the bathroom, waiting his turn to use it. He waited a minute or two before approaching his friend; the person using the bathroom finally exited.

As Hannibal took his time before greeting Will, Will noticed his friend watching him from down the hallway. He looked at Hannibal and smiled, in a beckoningly way, which prompted his best friend to saunter his way on over to Will, smiling back.

Both were extremely drunk from the round of drinks they had been passing around in the kitchen. Will hadn’t planned on drinking that night, but he had been having fun with Hannibal at his side and he knew his friend would make sure they would get home in one piece.

Will stared at Hannibal; he forgot how good looking his best friend was as he made his way over.

“Everyone thinks we’re dating.” Will murmured, reaching a bit for Hannibal’s shirt. Hannibal let him pull him close.

“Oh yeah?” He inched his body closer to Will’s.

Will nodded, tugging more at the fabric. “I told them we were just best friends, so don’t worry….”

Both were close enough to feel the sexual energy being produced between their bodies; it was as if they had forgotten that they were at a party and not the only two excluded from a world stuck in suspended animation, waiting for their next move with aching anticipation...

“The woman who owns that thrift store we went to also thought we were dating too...she said we were *very* cute.” Will added, putting extreme emphasis on the word “very.”

Hannibal leaned inward toward Will, about an inch away from his face, feeling his friend rub his body through the fabric of his shirt.

“So, what did you say?” Hannibal replied, fully aware of the answer.

Will tilted his head upward to look Hannibal in the eyes. “I said thanks…”

He let Hannibal pull him closer and draw him into a lingering kiss.

Part Twenty - Five

Chapter Notes

> 300 kudos - wow ! thank you so much for reading. And I'm also glad that people are enjoying this so far :)

How long will you be at this party?

Will felt Hannibal slowly wrap his hands around his waist and tenderly squeeze his body. One of Will's hands hugged his friend's side while the other rub the back of Hannibal's neck.

Not sure, it's up to Will…

He felt Hannibal wedge a leg in between his, pushing his body weight up against Will's as they moaned into each other's mouths.

Well, I'm getting off in an hour or so...I can pick you two up.

Don't worry about it, we'll call a taxi…

"H-Hannibal..." Will pulled away slightly from his friend, breathing heavily and his cheeks reddening from the intensity of the kiss. The way Hannibal eyed him when he pulled away made him blush even more.

...I'm spending the night anyway, so it's not a big deal.

Fine, Donald. I'll let you know when we're ready to leave.

Will took his time. He felt a little lightheaded, but good. However, he wasn't sure if the floating feeling came from the rounds of beers or being so close to Hannibal again.

Hannibal caressed Will's face with the edge of his thumb, waiting patiently for his friend to continue his sentence. Will closed his eyes, leaning into the touch, feeling Hannibal rub his lips with his thumb.

After opening his eyes again, Will looked away to gather his thoughts before looking directly back at Hannibal.

"...Hannibal...I miss you…" He murmured, caught a bit in disbelief that he had admitted something like that so willingly, yet excited to see Hannibal's reaction, hoping the feeling was mutual. He felt his friend's arm around his waist tighten.

Hannibal leaned forward to kiss Will again. They softly kissed each other before he responded, using the one hand to caress Will's neck while the either let go of his friend's waist and slowly stroked his side.

"I miss you too, Will." Hannibal whispered, kissing his friend on the lips before moving down towards his neck. They both rubbed each other's bodies more vigorously, grinding their hips into each other before their lips found the other's again.

Will felt himself getting hard; hearing Hannibal moan as he kissed and touched his body was more than he could handle. He pushed Hannibal away a bit, breathing deeply, trying to catch his breath before they continued.

Without saying a word, Will glanced around for the nearest bedroom and dragged Hannibal with him inside a suitable candidate. He slammed the door behind them as they madly bumped against each other, trying to take the other's shirt off before falling on top of a bed still embracing in a kiss.

Hannibal fell on top of Will and Will pushed himself up against Hannibal, trying to pull his friend as close as he could to his chest without hurting him. He felt Hannibal rub his crotch up against his; the fabric of their clothes restricting, wanting closer contact. After kissing Will on the neck, Hannibal straightened up into a kneeling position, hovering over his friend's body. He unzipped his pants, but before he could go any further Will grabbed him and yanked him downward.

Will couldn't control himself; he wanted Hannibal *now*. He tried freeing Hannibal from his pants as he kissed him on the lips and then all over his neck and chest, both panting heavily from the hurried movement.

Will reached downward and tried yanking Hannibal's pants off his body, but bumped his friend's phone instead, which was hanging out of one of Hannibal's pockets. As soon as Will grazed the phone, it started to vibrate with a phone call.

Hannibal grunted as he struggled to get the phone out of his pocket. He looked at the screen for a quick second before tossing the phone to the side of Will's head, returning his focus on dry humping his best friend.

Will smirked through a kiss on the lips and humped Hannibal back. He could feel Hannibal getting hard with him. The sensation was amazing; he had forgotten how great Hannibal felt up against his body.

"Uh…oh god...Hannibal…" Will whimpered, tightening his grasp around Hannibal's neck. At this point, Will's legs were around his friend's waist and Hannibal was thrusting downward into his crotch. Both were too caught up in the moment to continue removing their clothes.

Will used one hand to reach for Hannibal's backside and pull him even closer as the sexual friction between the two intensified. In this moment, Will found himself wanting to have sex with his best friend; a moment he hadn't realized until now that he had desperately wanted.

He could feel Hannibal wanting it too as his friend moaned with every thrust into his body, both of their cocks pressing against the fabric of their pants between each other.

Suddenly, Will felt a loud buzz from Hannibal's phone, which had slumped down close to his head as Hannibal pushed into his body harder and slower.

"Hannibal. Hannibal." Will started, trying to grab the phone.

It kept ringing and it was annoying the shit out of Will; all he wanted was to finally fuck his best friend for the first time in a while, and this stupid phone was getting in the way.

Hannibal stopped rubbing his body in between Will's legs, looking down at his friend with blurry intense eyes. Will had never seen Hannibal this way before; if the phone hadn't been so annoying, he would have reached up and shoved Hannibal over onto his back, sending them both into a hopelessly needed love making session.

Will pushed himself up onto his forearms before using one hand to hold Hannibal back. "Your phone is ringing."

He almost threw his friend's phone at him when he had noticed that the constant phone calls were coming from Donald.

Hannibal caught the phone as he looked downward at the caller. "It's Donald—"

"Yeah, I *know*." Will angrily cut his friend off, wiggling his body from out underneath Hannibal's body. He sat up in the bed, swinging his legs out to sit on the edge.

Hannibal took his time answering the call; he was trying to regain his composure, but the mixture of almost being with Will and the effects of alcohol left him a little flustered. Well, mostly being with his best friend again was what was making him so confounded; Will continued to shake his resolve, even now.

"*Please* answer your fucking phone, Hannibal. He'll just keep calling." Will huffed, leaning back onto the headboard of the bed with his legs hanging off the edge.

Hannibal accepted the call. "Donald…you're here...okay...okay...I need to find Will first… yes...we'll be out in a minute…" He hung up the phone.

Will sighed heavily before shooting daggers at his best friend. He was so pissed off that Donald had just ruined the perfect moment.

"Donald's outside. He volunteered to drive us home." Hannibal explained, almost sounding like himself, but a little drunk on way too many beers and Will's captivating presence.

Will rolled his eyes. He couldn't believe this was happening right now. He watched Hannibal zip his pants and start to get off the bed, but before he could do so, Will grabbed him by the arm.

"Hannibal...I wish…you…I wish you were...with me and not him…." Will slowly murmured, choosing not to filter his deep dark secret due to the alcohol.

Hannibal appeared as if he was caught off guard. He looked directly at Will before gently freeing his arm from his friend's grasp. He rose from the bed to find his shirt, putting it on before turning around to look at Will, who was lying on the bed now, looking dejected.

"Me too." Hannibal said back softly, before handing Will his shirt.

Will choked up a bit from the admission as he stood up from the bed, but Hannibal had to hold him literally and physically together to put his clothes on so they could meet Donald outside.

Both Hannibal and Will said their goodbyes through inebriated smiles before walking outside. They hopped into Donald's car and said nothing to each other as Donald drove in the direction of their apartment.

About thirty minutes later…

I have to get the fuck out of this car...

As soon as Donald stopped in front of the building, Will jumped out of the car, ran up the steps to the apartment, and dropped his keys by the door while trying to get into the building before Hannibal and Donald could. He felt someone caress his back gently. He almost turned around to slap the hand away, knowing it was Hannibal who was trying to help him find his keys.

Hannibal crouched down to search for Will's keys. "Hannibal, I got it." Will snapped, snatching his lost keys from a divot in the metal door frame. He jumped onto his feet, almost knocking Donald down the steps with his elbow, and ran inside.

He didn't look back to see if Hannibal and Donald went directly to Hannibal's room. He continued his march towards his bedroom, slamming the door with a satisfying thud before falling over on top of the bed.

Fuck Donald, that fucking cock block...

He felt like screaming, maybe even crying; he couldn't fathom that Hannibal was with Donald right now and not him. Donald had no clue about the nature of their relationship, or their attraction for one another, and it was killing Will inside that he was stuck all alone, wallowing in his drunken sorrow, literally cursing out loud at someone who had no idea how he and Hannibal felt about each other.

...or maybe he does…?

Will knew Donald wasn't stupid; there was no way he wasn't somewhat suspicious of his boyfriend's relationship with his best friend.

Will groaned as he turned over on his back, staring up at the ceiling, thinking about Hannibal grinding his body up against his…

"Ugh…" Will moaned as he used a pillow to shield his eyes as if that would cover up the memory to stop the current pain. He let his arms fall heavy to the bed, creating a loud thud in the process.

He laid in complete silence; straining to hear if Hannibal and Donald were still awake, then cursed at himself for trying to hear something that would upset him even more.

Would Hannibal fuck Donald after that?

Will turned over on his side; he felt his head swim with the lingering effects of all of the drinks he had had at the party. He still felt incredibly drunk and was pretty sure Hannibal was still drunk. His eyelids rose and slowly drooped down with sleep, as a drunk tired feeling rushed over his entire body.

Will fell asleep after a minute or two, drifting off to an alcohol induced slumber, thinking horrible thoughts about Donald, and what it would have felt like to have sex with Hannibal again.

The next morning...

Will shot up in bed, looking around from side to side, rubbing his eyes as he tried to remember where he was.

As the birds outside his window chirped away at the start of the morning and the sound of rain pinged against the glass, Will slowly realized that he was in his room. He was still wearing his clothes from last night, and the inside of his mouth felt like he hadn't had a drop of water in months.

He rubbed his forehead before running a hand through his hair, confused about how he had gotten home last night.

Did I come home with Hannibal?

Will didn't remember giving both Hannibal and Donald the cold shoulder when they got home, slamming the door to his bedroom, before falling over on top the bed.

He didn't remember the way Hannibal looked at him when he told his friend that he had wished he was with him instead of Donald or that they had almost ended up having sex on top of someone else's bed.

He did remember, however, kissing Hannibal outside of the bathroom...

Fuck...we made out again…

Will slumped into the bed, grabbing a pillow on the way down. He covered his face, silently screaming to himself; his relationship with Hannibal was beyond a friendship now. How would they ever get back to being "normal" again?

God, I hope Donald isn't fucking here…

Will laid in the bed, staring back up at the ceiling, thinking about how messed up his relationship with his best friend was. To Will, he thought that there was no possibility of him and Hannibal ever becoming just "friends" again; they were always messing around with each other, and it was clear that Hannibal didn't want to be with him.

My friendship with Hannibal is over...I fucked up...

Will sighed heavily before gaining the courage to push himself out of the bed. He swung his legs out of the sheets and bent over.

He couldn't believe that he had lost his best friend. Hannibal was probably the only person who understood him and accepted him...and he threw it away for sex.

He sighed again before standing up.

Maybe Hannibal is over at Donald's…I really don't want to see him…

He wobbled a bit before slowly dragging his feet to the bedroom door. He staggered out into the hallway, using his hand to catch himself before bumping into the wall.

His breath hitched when he heard someone clambering around in the kitchen.

Fuck...that's either Hannibal…or...Donald…

Will took a deep breath before entering the kitchen. He saw Hannibal in a low squat, pulling pots and pans out from the lower cabinets. He could tell from behind that his best friend seemed disheveled; Hannibal was always so put together, but from time to time, Will would catch him somewhat distressed. He had once thought it was cute, but now that his friendship with his best friend was over, a pain in his chest almost knocked him to his knees.

Will managed to plop his body into a chair, leaning over to cross his arms on top of the table. Hannibal had heard him come in and almost knock the chair over trying to sit down.

"Morning, Will." Hannibal greeted, sitting down on the floor. He had a serious case of bedhead, and he was only wearing his pajama bottoms. Will had to look away; he felt himself getting upset.

"Hey." He answered back, hating himself for responding. Will felt the tips of his ears warm up; the pain in his chest turned into a giant knot, which twisted itself around and around, leaving shards of agony in its path.

Hannibal sat in silence on the floor while Will stayed slumped over on the table. They didn't say anything else for what seemed like hours.

Will couldn't figure out, beyond what he had already decided about their relationship, why the silence was so deafening. He heard Hannibal sigh and cough a little.

Will closed his eyes; he dreaded hearing what Hannibal had planned to say next.

Our friendship is over…

"I broke up with Donald this morning."

Wait...what?

Will sat up suddenly. He stared at Hannibal, struggling to grasp his best friend's admission.

"...uh…um...wha—...I mean…s-sorry...to hear that…" He let out, fumbling around for the right thing to say without sounding pleasantly surprised.

Hannibal leaned his head up against the cabinets and smiled.

"Are…you okay?" Will asked, still shocked.

Hannibal smirked. "Never felt better."

Will almost gawked at his friend; he had never expected that this would be the outcome from the last kiss. The way Hannibal had been acting toward him from the truth or dare kiss had convinced Will that he and Hannibal could no longer be friends, considering they couldn't keep their hands off each other.

"Thankfully, I have the day off today. Since it's raining, would you like to watch movies with me all day? I was thinking we could make tapas." Hannibal smiled.

Will cocked his head to the side slightly. He was still confused as to what was happening.

So, we're fine? Does he remember that we made out last night? Will thought to himself, trying to analyze the situation.

Hannibal stood up and walked over to Will. Will shuffled nervously in the chair, not sure what to expect. Hannibal reached out a hand for Will to take. Will stared at it, hoping the whole scene wasn't a cruel dream.

"I'll show you what to do." Hannibal was still smiling, waiting for his friend to join him.

Will looked down at the outstretched hand; everything felt real. He tilted his head up and blushed. Hannibal had never looked so attractive.

He finally grinned and clasped his friend's hand with his own. "How difficult could it be to make tapas? Also, *I* get to pick the movies this time."

Hannibal chuckled and Will grinned even more. He let his friend gently pull him in the direction of the stove.

They spent the rest of the day cooking and watching movies together...almost as if they had gone back to the times before they started having sex...but of course it didn't feel the same...there was still an underlying attraction between the two, but this time they were more open about it...

Part Twenty - Six

Chapter Notes

> My apologies for how late chapter 26 is, but I hope you enjoy it being uploaded with chapter 27 :)
>
> --lady_slice

"Hmmm…" Beverly murmured partly to herself, but loud enough for Will to overhear as he concluded his story.

"What?" Will sighed. He shuffled in his chair a bit, preparing himself for Beverly's usual take on how ridiculous she thought he and Hannibal were with each other.

Please don't tell me that you feel bad for Donald...

"Not trying to give you a hard time, or take sides, but I *kinda* feel bad for Donald..." She answered, finishing her glass of water, side eyeing her friend.

Will rolled his eyes. In retrospect, he sort of felt bad for Donald too, but he couldn't (or wouldn't) do anything about it. It was all in the past, yet another piece to his complicated history with Hannibal.

"Sounds like another causality in your and Hannibal's love game." Beverly quipped, not letting up on the whole Donald thing.

Will rolled his eyes again, hard. Beverly thought he was going to fall out of his chair.

The comment about Donald was Beverly attempt to get Will to see how other people might get hurt because of the lack of communication between himself and Hannibal. Yet, she was still cautious of overdoing the admonishment of her friend's past actions. She knew he was very sensitive about the subject, and it would only backfire if she pushed him harder.

"Hannibal and I are just friends now." Will replied, half believing, half doubting himself. He knew Beverly was trying to get him to see how being honest about his feelings for Hannibal would prevent others from getting hurt.

Yet, he thought lying to himself about his relationship with Hannibal and dealing with the issue later were the best answers to the problem.

Beverly eyed him as if she still didn't believe him.

"Honestly, Beverly. We're *just* friends." Will repeated himself mostly, returning the gaze.

They both stared at each other for a moment or two longer; Beverly shooting daggers of doubt at her friend, parallel to Will now trying to avoid the look by pretending to glance at something else down the bar. The intense moment seemed to last forever and was only interrupted by Beverly's cell phone vibrating with a text message.

Beverly took her phone out of her pocket. "Oh, it's Miriam. I'm supposed to meet her later to talk about a class we're planning to teach together in the fall." She rose from her chair and took out some money to pay for her part of the bill.

Will finished his drink before getting up to join her standing. "Tell her I said hi when you get a chance." He said as he placed some cash on the bar to pay for his share. He was inwardly relieved that the intense moment had subsided with the message from Miriam.

Beverly pulled on her coat. She looked at Will, lingering a bit to get his attention. She knew he knew what she was going to say.

Will, out of the corner of his eye, could see Beverly eyeing him again as he put his wallet away. "Beverly, I'm going to talk to her, I promise."

"*Before* Hannibal gets here." Beverly added, straightening out her jacket before putting her hands on her hips.

Will sighed. He didn't know what else he could say to convince Beverly that telling Molly now would only make matters worse.

"Will, I know you said everything is complicated with Hannibal and that you think it's best to wait to speak to Molly, but you really need to do so before Hannibal gets here…"

Will looked at Beverly before averting his eyes, trying to stare off into space in order to keep himself calm.

Freddie doesn't know you the way I know you, Will.

No one knows you the way I know you…

I knew I was in love with you since that night, however, I fear the feelings are...unrequited…

"Ugh." Will clenched his side again, the memories from over a year ago were too much to revisit this time around. He felt Beverly grab a hold of his arm as he doubled over in pain.

"Will, are you all right?" She asked, helping her friend straighten out his body until he was standing again.

Will took a deep breath before sighing. He let his body relax as best as it could before responding.

"Beverly...I can't..."

"Will." Beverly replied with a stern, yet soft voice.

You're the reason why Hannibal and I hate each other now. You ruined one of the few important relationships I've had and I'm done.

Fuck you, Will. You can keep your fucking boyfriend.

"You were there in the hospital the day I finally broke things off with Freddie..." Will stopped for second to get Beverly to see his point.

She nodded before he continued.

"Please let me do it my way. I promise I'll be honest afterward...okay?" Will asked, pleading with his eyes, his last attempt to get Beverly to see where he was coming from.

Beverly stepped back a bit and sighed, loudly. She placed her hands on her hips again, looking downward before glancing back up at her friend.

This is a huge mistake; I already know it. She thought to herself, yet she wasn't aware of the entire deal with Hannibal, and Will was an adult and entitled to make his own decisions...even if she didn't agree with them and was only looking out for him. She ultimately knew that he was going to do what he thought was best...hopefully it would be the right decision.

"Fine, Will. But you have to promise me you'll come clean to Molly right after Hannibal leaves." She demanded, almost wagging her index finger in her friend's face.

Will gently grabbed her hand and pulled her in for a quick hug. Beverly rolled her eyes as she accepted the hug.

"You're ridiculous, you know that right?" She said as Will finally let her go. He held onto her waist as she put her hands on his shoulders.

Will only nervously chuckled in response to his friend's quip. He knew this whole thing with Hannibal's visit was ridiculous, but based on past experiences, his solution to the problem seemed to be the only option.

It hadn't occurred to Will that maybe being honest with his feelings for his best friend would be the best option, but of course, he wouldn't find that out until a few months into the future…

"Call me later this weekend, okay?" Beverly responded as she pulled away to head toward the door.

Will nodded as he followed his friend out of the pub. They said their goodbyes before heading in opposite directions.

Fine, Will. But you have to promise me you'll come clean to Molly right after Hannibal leaves…

God, I hope I'm making the right decision... Will thought to himself, taking his time walking up to his car.

Later that Friday...

“I’ll have the pesto with the chicken.” Molly requested as she handed her menu to the waiter. The waiter nodded as he took the menu after scribbling down the order on a notepad.

“Will? Are you ready to order?”

Molly and Will were getting dinner at a nice Italian restaurant that Molly had been wanting to try for the longest time. Will had finally made reservations and they managed to get a table for dinner service that Friday.

Will was anxiously shifting in his chair, thinking more about Hannibal’s impending visit than whether he wanted the fettuccine alfredo or ossobuco.

“Sir, have you decided?” Their waiter’s voice faded off into the distance.

This time, Will was obsessively thinking about just seeing Hannibal in person for the first time in over a year.

He had stored away all the photos he owned of the two of them, not wanting to throw them away, but he couldn’t bear the thought of seeing Hannibal’s likeness. The smallest detail without seeing his friend’s face would send him over the edge, so revisiting old photos of them together was out of the question.

“Will? Will? Are you ready to order?” Will heard Molly calling for him through his daydream haze.

“Uh?” Will looked up from his menu and thoughts to find both Molly and the waiter staring at him.

Their waiter looked annoyed that he was taking too long to place an order, but Molly had a cheerful smile on her face, waiting patiently for her boyfriend to respond. Will’s stomach instantly turned into knots as thoughts of Hannibal mixed with Molly’s innocent, unknowing smile.

Fuck...

“Um, I think I’ll try the ossobuco.” Will clambered, nervously shutting his menu close before handing it over to the waiter. The waiter nodded before whisking their menus away from the table.

Both Molly and Will sat in complete silence, Will grinning like a nervous wreck before taking a sip of his water and Molly still smiling, attempting to get to the heart of her boyfriend’s anxiousness by being as nice and kind as possible.

“So, tell me more about your friend Hannibal.” Molly asked, unknowingly waiting for the exact moment for Will to take a sip of his water then almost spit it out from the question.

Fortunately, Will managed to keep the water in his mouth, yet he couldn’t prevent himself from choking a little (and quite possibly on his feelings) as he gulped.

“Um, what would you like to know?” He began cautiously.

He didn’t know why he was being so weird right now; Molly was only asking him a simple question about his closest and oldest friend...nothing suspicious about a best friend...unless you fucked that best friend a few times in the past.

“Well, I remember you telling me that he likes to cook.” Molly started.

Will smirked. Actually, he said that Hannibal was a “pretty good” chef. He smiled to himself thinking about all the meals Hannibal used to prepare for the two of them...plus Abigail.

Abigail…

Through the entire time that Will had been worrying about Hannibal, he had forgotten to reply to Abigail’s last email. She had sent him an email earlier in the week, describing her plans for the summer and possibly making a trip to Baltimore.

“What’s with the facial gymnastics?” Molly playfully quipped, watching her boyfriend’s mood change from amusement to slight anxiousness.

“Oh,” Will laughed nervously, “remember my ‘little sister’ from New York? I forgot to reply to her last email.” Will said pulling out his phone to flag Abigail’s last email to remind himself to answer later.

“Yes, Abigail, right?” Molly answered.

“Yes...I should probably tell her that Hannibal’s coming to visit…” Will trailed off.

“Oh, she knows Hannibal, too? I guess that makes sense, since you two lived together in New York…”

“Yeah, it was just the three of us for a while until they placed her with new family in Philadelphia.” Will replied, lingering his eyes on Abigail’s email before putting his phone away. He sighed, wanting to shield his swelling eyes from his girlfriend, who was watching him fidget from across the table.

He both loved and hated receiving emails from Abigail, because, as was mentioned before, she reminded him of Hannibal. And now, even more so, with the upcoming weekend and the divulging of details to Beverly over the past few days, seeing anything from Abigail sent Will reeling.

“I remember you mentioning something about her living in Philadelphia. Is she enjoying herself?” Molly asked, unaware of Will’s deepest thoughts.

Will nodded slightly. Even though she reminded him of Hannibal, he missed seeing Abigail on a daily basis.

Coincidentally, after she had moved to Philadelphia, his relationship with Hannibal got rocky. The big move was around the same time that his mother had died and when he ended up having sex with Hannibal after the funeral.

Will's memories filtered back to an all-day fishing trip he once had with Abigail, the same fishing trip where Abigail had asked Will if he and Hannibal were dating, almost getting Will to come to terms with his feelings for his best friends by asking him innocent yet pointed questions.

Is Hannibal your boyfriend?

Um, no, he's not my boyfriend. He's just my best friend…

Oh, I mean...I only asked because you live together…

Two people can live together and not be in a relationship, Abigail.

That's true, but you also hug each other… a lot…

Will sighed to himself.

But if two people love each other, couldn't they make things work?

"Will, are you okay?" He heard Molly's voice through his past memories.

Will shook his head slightly. "Yes, sorry. I'm a little tired." He lied.

Molly reached across the table to take a hold of Will's arm. She gently caressed it while giving him a kind smile. He forced himself to smile back at her, but the emotional memories of his past life with Hannibal and Abigail were upsetting him.

He repeated to himself in his head over and over, that that was the past now and he couldn't change anything. Hannibal was only the best friend that he had almost lost and would hopefully reconcile with soon.

"We won't stay too long. I know you've been busy. And you're probably a little exhausted with having to deal with that party before Hannibal visits next weekend." Molly commented, slowly taking her hand away so she could drink her water.

Will nodded. He leaned back into his chair; arms crossed slightly on top of his legs. He looked over the table at Molly, but he was thinking about Hannibal; missing spending nights like this with his best friend, only at home cooking a meal together...or well Hannibal showing Will how to cook a meal.

He tried to let his feelings go for the moment; Will knew that Molly would eventually catch on that something was bothering him, so he tried to be as enjoyable as possible during this dinner.

“So how was your day today?” Will asked Molly, furtively changing the subject, just enough for Molly to take the hint that talking about Abigail might be a little painful, but not suspicious enough for her to question him more.

Will could tell from her reaction to the change in subject that she had figured that talking about Abigail brought up issues related to the fight with Hannibal. Will sighed to himself, relieved that she wasn’t planning on pressing him.

They continued their conversation discussing both of their days; possible plans for the rest of the weekend; and how to get Will’s apartment ready for the party next weekend. Their food arrived and they outwardly enjoyed their meals, while, inwardly, Will was still thinking about Hannibal and Abigail.

About an hour and a half later...

“Still too busy to sleep over tonight?” Molly asked as Will opened the door to his car to let her in.

Will waited to answer until both he and Molly got into the car. “I’m afraid I can’t tonight. I should focus on grading a few papers before relaxing this weekend.”

Molly nodded as Will turned on the car. “Yeah, you’re *really* dragging your feet.” She playfully responded.

Will smirked before heading in the direction of Molly’s apartment complex. He dropped her off after kissing her goodbye, then lingering a while before turning the car back on to make sure that she got into her apartment okay. He sighed a bit before heading in the direction of his own apartment.

Later that night...

Will walked into his bedroom and fell over on top of the bed. Winston followed him in, jumping in bed in unison with Will’s fall. Will turned over on his back, letting Winston climb on top of chest. He stared up at the ceiling. Part of him felt anxious and a little guilty. Anxious because of the upcoming weekend with Hannibal and…guilty…well because he hadn’t told the complete truth to Beverly yet.

He sighed heavily, rubbing his forehead with his hands. He felt horrible not being honest with one of his closest friends; Beverly had been there for him since his accident. He truly

appreciated that she was willing to listen to his issues with Hannibal, but he knew she was frustrated with how he was handling them.

Okay, okay. Fine. We made out like three times…

Are you serious??

The whole truth was that after Hannibal broke up with Donald, they had gotten closer, closer than they had been before they started having sex, but still not willing to call what their relationship really was.

Will closed his eyes, thinking about the year after Donald was out of the picture. He felt himself drifting off to sleep, thinking about great times he had spent with his best friend during his first year at Columbia.

His body slumped into the mattress, falling into a slumber.

That past year had been a great year, but it was also the same year that had led up to the two of them deciding to be “friends with benefits.”

Part Twenty - Seven

About a year later after Hannibal broke up with Donald...

Ever since Hannibal broke up with Donald, Will's relationship with his best friend took a turn (I'll let you judge whether it was for the better). Yes, they started "acting" like best friends again, but their closeness evolved past "best friendship"...basically to the point where people regularly often mistook them for boyfriends instead of friends. The two of them never seemed to mind, however, laughing off the mistake with "oh yeah we get that all the time" or "we're just *really* close."

And now that it was just the two of them...no one else in their lives they were interested in or dating, no other close friends they called on to spend time with...it was just Will and Hannibal...and the sexual tension was palpable.

Over the next year, their closeness became even more intense…however, neither Will nor Hannibal took the time to effectively address their relationship, because you know, they're absolutely ridiculous.

Whenever Hannibal had free time from the hospital and when Will wasn't studying for class, the two would spend either the whole day together or just the evenings catching up.

Will managed to convince Hannibal again to go with him on fishing trips to Upstate New York and they would spend the evenings sleeping outside of their shared tent, reminiscing about the past. On the other hand, Hannibal managed to get Will to go with him to showings at local art galleries or to accompany him to the Metropolitan Opera.

Will would bitch and moan about going, but he secretly loved being his best friend's date because, as was mentioned before, people would often mistake Hannibal's best friend for his boyfriend and Will relished in the idea, even though he was still confused about his feelings. It was more about Hannibal being his than anyone else's at this point in Will's life.

Oh and they started sleeping together again....but, it's not what you think...just in the same bed, like they had back when they were younger. So, it was innocent...kind of...

It wasn't every night, but most nights they would share the same bed. It really depended on whose room was the warmest or the coolest, or if they had fallen asleep watching a movie together in either Hannibal's or Will's bed that night, the other being too lazy to get up and go down the hallway to his own room, waking up in the middle of the night to find that they were both cuddling each other. So yeah, it was "innocent"...

However, sleeping together didn't really become an issue, until one night after Will's first year at Columbia...

That night, Will and Hannibal were sitting on the couch in their living room, re-watching the first season of *The Hunt*. Hannibal was sitting close to the edge next to the arm rest and Will

was sitting in the middle, close enough to almost touch his best friend's body, but not quite. He also kept his hands to himself, even though he felt compelled to touch Hannibal.

To be fair, they had been "touchy feely" this whole past year, so it wouldn't have been out of the ordinary to give Hannibal a playful hug or nudge him a bit with his shoulders, but for some reason this night felt different to Will...however, he just shrugged it off as him over thinking the moment.

"I can't believe they cancelled this show. It's so good!" Will sighed, leaning back hard into the couch while throwing his hands up into the air.

Hannibal smiled at him before stretching. Will watched his friend extend his limbs outward, waiting for the exact moment when Hannibal's shirt lifted up slightly so that his body was exposed. Will averted his eyes when he noticed that Hannibal had caught him staring, but he didn't say anything.

Dammit, did he see me?

Will blushed faintly; he had been cautious with his coy glances towards Hannibal for a while now, but his best friend never seemed to notice. Or never felt the need to respond if he had.

Hannibal only turned his head a bit to the side to look at Will, but Will looked away. He was embarrassed that Hannibal had caught him looking at him the way that he had had.

Fuck, he did see me...

Even though Will was embarrassed by his action, Hannibal enjoyed it. He had noticed whenever Will was looking or staring at him, watching his best friend linger his gaze for a moment or two longer than was really necessary. Hannibal never said anything about it, he only waited for Will to approach him naturally. He knew Will was getting closer to him with every passing day, so it was easy for him to wait.

"I agree. I did find a petition online to save the show." Hannibal commented, scooting closer to Will. He would wait, but in the meantime why not encourage Will's curiosity?

"We should sign it!" Will exclaimed, totally unaware that Hannibal was trying to inch closer toward his body, now caught up the fervor to save his favorite TV show.

He felt Hannibal wrap an arm around his shoulders and pull him closer to his side. Will accepted the half hug, trying not to look directly at Hannibal because he knew his face was bright red now. He felt his heart start to thump with nervousness and his palms moisten with anxiety.

Will could feel Hannibal's nose brush his neck; he hadn't expected that. It caught him off guard a little.

"Already did. I'll send you the link." Hannibal whispered into his ear.

Will almost gawked. All he could think about now was how close Hannibal was to his face. He felt a hand lightly caress his thigh and then pull away. Will gulped as he watched

Hannibal get up from the couch and head toward the hallway in the direction of their bedrooms.

“I’m going to take a shower and probably head to bed soon.” Hannibal said...well actually it sounded more like an invitation that Will only slightly nodded his head to.

“Um...oh okay…I’ll stop by to say goodnight in a bit...” Was all Will could say in response, acting as if he didn’t hear the invitation to sleep in Hannibal’s room.

Why am I being so weird? We’ve been sleeping together for a while now…

Hannibal only nodded before disappearing down the hallway. Will slumped over his knees and sighed. He didn’t understand why now all of a sudden his emotions were throwing him for a loop.

Yeah, people mistook them for being boyfriends because they were close, but it wasn’t true. And yeah, they did sleep in the same bed together most nights, but that was only out of convenience…well okay, it was because it was nice having a warm body sleep next to you...but it wasn’t because they wanted to fuck each other…

Right? Will pondered to himself.

He lingered a bit on the couch, thinking about what to do next. He could either sleep in Hannibal’s room and confront his feelings or he could sleep in his own room, effectively making things awkward between the two of them again.

He decided that he would hang out in his room for a while, wait for Hannibal to finish his shower, shower next, then figure out his next move.

I’m probably just overthinking things…Hannibal’s always being flirtatious…

He sighed with a huge inhale of air to lift himself up from the couch. He headed directly for his bedroom and waited by the door to listen for Hannibal’s exit from the bathroom. He felt silly for waiting like this; he wanted to avoid Hannibal long enough until he knew what he wanted that night, so running into him on the way to the bathroom was out of the question.

After waiting for what seemed like hours, Will heard the bathroom door open and close followed by the sound of very light foot steps down the hallway, ending with Hannibal’s bedroom door opening and closing.

Will yanked opened his bedroom door and ran into the bathroom, accidentally slamming the door closed. He leaned up against the door, panting, his heart racing.

Oh my god...I’m being ridiculous…

He clenched his chest to still his heartbeat, reminding himself again that they had slept in the same bed almost every night for the past year.

Will took his time approaching the bathroom mirror. Hannibal had wiped it dry with a towel, but the condensation was making its way back from the fresh shower. The whole bathroom

smelled like the body wash Hannibal loved to use. Will took his time wafting in the scent; he was used to it, but for some reason now he yearned to bask in it as long as possible.

He turned around to lean up against the sink, crossing his arms to think a bit about what to do before jumping into the shower. He turned his head to the side, now really noticing how meticulous Hannibal's side of the shower looked with his toiletries neatly organized compared to how messy his side looked with the few items he needed to get ready with.

It just like any other night Will, relax.

Will uncrossed his arms, reaching back behind himself to clench the edge of the sink. He sighed, gathered himself and decided to sleep with Hannibal. Besides, they've been sleeping together every single night this past week so tonight wouldn't be any different.

It shouldn't be anyway, why make a big deal about it?

Will finally hopped into the shower after his heart decided to calm down; it had been beating like crazy, but now he felt calm, especially after lingering in the warm shower taking the moment to himself.

After about thirty minutes, Will stepped out of the shower. He dried himself off before heading toward to his bedroom to change into his pajamas, which consisted of a t-shirt and a pair of boxers.

Hannibal usually slept in pajama bottoms, which Will thought would be annoying to sleep in because he liked to have his legs freed, but Hannibal had told him once that the specific fabric the pajamas were made out (maybe silk? Will thought) allowed his body to move around more easily when he slept.

Will stopped himself. *Am I really thinking about Hannibal sliding around in his pajama bottoms at night?*

He sighed then laughed out loud; he realized he was being absurd. *I should head over to his room before he falls asleep.*

Will opened the door to his bedroom and headed toward Hannibal's room.

Actually, he might be waiting for me...

He knocked on Hannibal's bedroom door. His heart was racing again, but he still didn't know why he was so nervous. Spending the night with Hannibal most nights hadn't been awkward, it was just the opposite; it felt like the times they shared a bed before they had sex.

Yet tonight, after the moment on the couch, Will felt himself experiencing feelings for his best friend he had thought were only the product of Hannibal being with someone else.

Will knocked on the door again. After a minute, Hannibal opened it. He was wearing the bottoms to his usual pajamas. Will stared without saying a word.

Hannibal smiled. “Would you like to come in?” He asked, stepping to the side to let Will in before hearing the answer.

Will nodded yes before slowly making his way into Hannibal’s room. He accidentally brushed past his friend as he headed in the direction of the bed.

He slowly walked over to one side of the bed, sat down close to the edge before lifting the covers to swing his legs underneath. Hannibal was over by his dresser, looking at himself in the mirror.

Will looked over at the dresser and noticed that Hannibal was using the mirror to look back at him. He blushed before turning over on his side so that his friend wouldn’t see how red his face had gotten. Hannibal smirked before tussling his hair a bit longer and walked over to the other side of the bed.

“Why are you fixing your hair before you go to bed? It’ll just get messed up while you sleep.” Will murmured through a pillow, trying to act cool.

He felt the other side of the bed slumped downward with Hannibal’s body weight. Hannibal chuckled as he got underneath the sheets to join Will. Will turned slightly to look at Hannibal.

“Just primping myself to look nice for you.” Hannibal replied with a coy smile which prompted Will to blush even more before turning his body to look up at the ceiling.

Dammit, Hannibal…

“Ugh, shut up, Hannibal.” Will playfully responded as best as he could. The weird emotional feeling he had had before entering his friend’s bedroom returned.

Will felt Hannibal’s warmth radiate off his body as he felt his friend’s body inch closer toward his. He squirmed a little underneath the sheets, trying to act like he was getting comfortable, but actually he was nervous with how close Hannibal was to his body.

He cleared his throat as he felt Hannibal turn to face him, his cheeks blushing as he felt Hannibal place a hand on his face and lightly stroke it.

“I have to work in the morning and most of the afternoon…maybe the evening...” Hannibal trailed off, extending the dramatic pause and sexual tension between himself and Will.

Will gave in a little and scooted closer to Hannibal to place a hand on his waist. He let Hannibal pull him closer, anxiously waiting for his friend to get to the point.

“...so, I don’t think I’ll be able to see you until late tomorrow night, unfortunately.” Hannibal finally concluded.

Will rolled his eyes. “I’m fully capable of being by myself, Hannibal.” He playfully said back, lightly shoving his friend.

Hannibal moved his hand from Will's cheek to his waist in an effort to combat his friend's shove.

"I'm only keeping you in the loop, Will." Hannibal quipped, caressing Will's side.

Hannibal tilted his face closer to Will's. At this point, both their noses were touching each other's, and Will could feel his heart beating faster than ever before. This moment wasn't like the others where they had been close after they first had sex; for some reason it felt much more intimate, and they hadn't done anything.

Suddenly, Hannibal leaned forward more to lightly brush his lips up against Will's. Will held back a little, not sure what to do, but after feeling Hannibal's lips up against his own, he leaned forward to kiss Hannibal back.

Hannibal moved his hand from Will's waist up to the back of his neck and stroked his friend while they made out in the bed. The kiss was nice, not super intense, more like a kiss you would give your boyfriend before going to bed.

Will moaned slightly, clenching onto Hannibal's waist a bit tighter, feeling Hannibal run his fingers through his hair. He could hear Hannibal moaning too, which caused the warm feeling in his core to travel down to the nether regions of his body…

But before things could go any further, they both pulled away at the same time, looking at each other deeply in the eyes. Will didn't feel weird about it; the kiss was lovely and Hannibal seemed super comfortable like always.

Hannibal caressed Will's face with his thumb. "Good night, Will." He then leaned inward to kiss his friend again.

Will kissed Hannibal back before they separated again. "Night, Hannibal." He whispered before turning over on his side to face the opposite direction.

He felt Hannibal cup his body with his own and wrap his arms around his waist. He leaned backward into the embrace and they both feel asleep intertwined within each other's limbs.

Part Twenty - Eight

Chapter Notes

> Hey guys ! Thank you for reading. I have to admit, sometimes I get super tired and lose motivation, but seeing so many people comment here, on tumblr, and on twitter gives me new life.
>
> Thank you so much, and I hope you guys continue to enjoy this story.
>
> --lady_slice

The next night...

Last night, Hannibal had lied about having to be at the hospital all day and all night. Actually, the truth was that he was planning on preparing a surprise homemade dinner for Will to celebrate his first year in grad school.

He had figured that Will would hang out in a nearby park for a while before coming back home around the time Hannibal had said he would be back from Mount Sinai.

Hannibal effortlessly whisked himself around the kitchen, rustling up a few of Will's favorite dishes. He had also decided to throw in a dish or two that he thought Will should try, you know, in order to broaden his palate. It would come in handy when they hosted future dinner parties together.

Hannibal suddenly stopped in the middle of the kitchen, in the process of stirring a sauce. The thought of the two of them hosting dinner parties, or hosting anything together for that matter, left Hannibal feeling overly confident; his plan to get Will to come to him naturally seem to be working in his favor.

Last night had been the sign he had been waiting for the past year; any hint that his best friend was interested in pursuing any type of romantic relationship gave Hannibal enough leverage to push Will further.

Based on their latest interactions, he knew Will would end up making some sort of move tonight; he knew his best friend was a hopeless romantic, even given his lack of relationship experience and distaste for constant social mingling. Will loved to have someone care for him and to care for; he just needed to see that that person was only Hannibal.

He'll be pleasantly surprised. Hannibal thought to himself, knowing full well that Will hated surprises, but the fact that Hannibal had taken the time to prepare a nice dinner for the two of them this evening would even force someone like Will to blush at the effort.

He spent the next hour or so making sure the dishes were plated properly before delicately removing his apron and heading to his bedroom to shower and change.

About an hour later, Will opened the door to their apartment. He glanced around a bit before his nose detected delicious smells radiating from the kitchen. He smiled before taking his time approaching, impressed that Hannibal had found the time to make dinner after being at the hospital all day.

I thought he said he would be at the hospital all day... Will thought to himself. He found his best friend standing in their kitchen, lighting two candles at their breakfast table.

Earlier that day, Will had accepted an invite to grab coffee with some of his fellow students. He didn't want to go; he had been keeping mostly to himself the entire year (while also spending most of his free time with Hannibal), but his cohort mates managed to convince him to join since they hadn't really seen him the past year. Will reluctantly had agreed but had planned on leaving early when an opportunity presented itself.

About an hour of listening to the group bitch about their least favorite professor or discuss their plans for summer vacation, Will left the coffee shop before heading over to the nearby park to clear his head. He had been thinking constantly the last few hours about last night…

Last night, kissing Hannibal, had been nice. More nice than Will had realized it to be as he fell asleep, cradled in his best friend's arms, legs wrapped around his. He wasn't sure how he felt about it, however. He knew he was attracted to Hannibal; it took him a while to come to terms with that since the last time they had sex. He just wasn't sure how to go about it.

The thought of being in a relationship with his best friend still terrified him. He still believed that Hannibal was capable of losing interest in anyone he was dating, and if he wasn't interested in people like Abel Gideon, Tobias Budge, or Donald Sutcliffe, then why would he be interested in someone like Will?

Yet, the kiss last night felt like something else; Will knew that Hannibal held him in special regard compared to others, probably because they were each other's oldest and closest friend, but Will couldn't see a possible relationship with his best friend.

It just seemed too easy…too easy of an answer to their complicated history. To Will, based on their past, the relationship simply wouldn't last...and then he would end up losing his best friend.

But, that kiss…

The kiss was screwing with Will's mind, and he was having trouble trying to focus on the right answer. Will thought maybe he should be open about his feelings for Hannibal tonight.

Maybe they could finally talk to each other and communicate about how they felt about the other.

Unfortunately, all of that mental preparation went out the window when Will set his eyes on Hannibal lighting candles in their kitchen. The lights were dimmed, and the counters were covered with some of his favorite dishes.

Will slowly walked into the kitchen, glancing around, barely containing his amazement with all the work Hannibal had put into dinner.

“You made dinner?” Will asked, a shocked expression plastered onto his face as he let his bag hit the floor before plopping down into one of the chairs.

Hannibal straightened out his shirt, which Will had noticed was tightly (and nicely) fitted, as he grinned. He turned around to retrieve two clean plates from a cabinet, place the dishes on the table, and then took one of the plated dishes of the counter to put on top of a trivet on the table.

Will watched his friend move around the kitchen, studying how in shape Hannibal was. He thought briefly about how Hannibal looked naked, but then slightly shook his head to refocus on the dinner.

“I lied about having to be at Mount Sinai today. I actually spent the whole day preparing dinner for you.” Hannibal answered, not missing a beat as he finished setting the table.

Will gawked. “You made me dinner? Why?”

Hannibal chuckled. “We have to celebrate your completed first year, Will.” He sat down at the table across from his friend.

Will looked back at Hannibal, mouth still hanging open from the realization that his best friend had made him a nice dinner. He blushed almost immediately.

“Hannibal, you didn’t have to do that.” Will gushed, mimicking his friend placing a napkin on his lap.

“Why wouldn’t I? You deserve something nice from time to time.” Hannibal smiled at Will which prompted a smile from his younger friend, but then Will averted his eyes when he realized that his face was bright red.

Hannibal gestured for him to start eating. They enjoyed the dinner, talking about Will’s upcoming classes, whether he was enjoying the program, business at Mount Sinai, and plans for an out-of-town trip in the next few weeks.

After they finished dinner, Will helped Hannibal clear the table. They didn’t say anything to each other, taking advantage of the comfortable silence they had cultivated throughout the history of their relationship.

Hannibal was putting dishes into the sink while Will cleaned the table. Will joined his friend at the sink; Hannibal washed the dishes and Will dried them. They poked fun at each other,

giving the other a hard time about his designated job.

Will stopped drying for a second. He looked over at Hannibal, scooting closer to his friend's body.

"Thank you for dinner, Hannibal." He said, still looking directly at his friend.

Hannibal, still looking downward into the sink, nodded. "You're welcome."

Will inched closer. He could feel his heart thumping. "You know, you look great tonight…"

Part of him couldn't believe that he had just said that out loud. Will had completely forgotten about openly discussing with Hannibal their relationship. Part of him now just wanted to kiss his best friend.

Hannibal glanced at Will and smiled. Will knew his best friend had appreciated the compliment.

Will leaned inward and kissed Hannibal on the lips. He lingered, waiting for Hannibal to kiss him back before placing his hands on his friend's waist. He felt Hannibal pull him in close toward his body and rub his backside.

Hannibal moaned into Will's mouth as he pulled his friend closer. They rubbed each other, loudly moaning in between each kiss, filling each moment reserved for catching their breaths with "oh my god," or "I missed you," and "I missed you, too."

Will and Hannibal remained in their interlocking embrace for a minute or two longer before Hannibal broke away and shoved Will up against the sink. The move caught Will off guard; he was now facing away from Hannibal and incapable of moving due to Hannibal tightly gripping onto his body.

Will wasn't sure what to do, but he could feel his body sexually reacting to Hannibal's body firmly pressed up against his. He closed his eyes and imagined Hannibal fucking him from behind; he felt his friend rub his hardening cock through the fabric of their clothing up against his backside.

He leaned forward slightly, feeling his body completely give into Hannibal. He had felt this vulnerable with his best friend before; the first time they had sex, Will had gotten to the point to where his body was somewhat relaxed, allowing Hannibal to enter him with more ease.

However, this time, Will felt more willing. He wanted Hannibal to enter him as hard as possible, filling and feeling his body with every inch of his of cock. He closed his eyes even tighter as he felt Hannibal rest his forehead on his shoulder, still rubbing him from behind.

"I'm not going to take it easy, Will..." Hannibal started, indicating that any wanting sexual desire between the two of them would be the opposite of the first time; Hannibal wanted Will, he had been waiting for his friend to come back to him wholeheartedly for a while now, and he didn't know how long he could stand not being close again.

Will only whimpered back, letting Hannibal squeeze his body tighter.

“I’ve been waiting too long for this, and I’m not going to hold back.” Hannibal slowly whispered into Will’s ear. He put a hand on the back of Will’s neck, using his index finger to trace swirls on friend’s skin, sending shivers down Will’s spine.

Will felt the hand move from the back of his neck to the side. Hannibal massaged his neck and shoulder while also using his thumb to caress his ear. He felt Hannibal’s breath on the back his neck where the imaginary swirls had been.

Will was still incapable of verbally expressing himself; the way that Hannibal was touching his body was more than he could handle and all he could think about was Hannibal fucking him on the kitchen floor.

Hannibal felt Will letting his body give into him more. He let the moment last a moment longer, relishing in how his friend’s body was reacting to his touch.

“...H-Hannibal…” Will began; he, by this time, was gripping onto the edge of the sink, losing himself in the moment.

Hannibal grinned. He leaned more into Will’s backside, pulling him as close as physically possible to his body without hurting his friend. Will push against Hannibal’s body, using his grip on the sink to force his body more into Hannibal’s.

Hannibal kissed up and down along Will’s neck, using one hand to hold onto Will while keeping the other on the side of his friend’s neck.

Will had his eyes closed still, but he felt Hannibal’s index finger lightly caressing his lips. He opened his mouth and the finger entered, Will mimicking sucking on Hannibal’s cock by licking up and down along his friend’s finger.

Will used his body weight to push Hannibal away before turning around quickly to face him. He pulled Hannibal for a kiss then pushed his best friend down onto the floor. Hannibal half laid on the floor, partly excited and partly shocked by the move.

Will took his shirt off before getting on top of Hannibal. They started to grind into each other’s hips, moaning into each other’s mouths through hurried kisses. Will yanked off Hannibal’s pants before reaching down to grab a hold of his cock.

Will scooted his body downward, leaving kisses along Hannibal’s body. He looked up at Hannibal before replacing his hand with his mouth, licking up and down his friend’s cock. Hannibal moaned, feeling Will and running his hand through his friend’s hair.

Will let go of Hannibal’s cock before removing his own pants and boxers. He got on top of Hannibal before lowering himself downward, moaning faintly from feeling his best friend inside of him again. Will collapsed forward, letting Hannibal grab onto his body. Will rode his friend, grinding harder and slower down into Hannibal’s hips, holding himself up with one hand.

“Oh my god, Hannibal.” He whimpered.

Hannibal rocked their bodies downward with Will now on the bottom and him on top. Will wrapped his legs around his friend, moaning loudly from Hannibal pushing himself inside.

Will felt his body wanting to release itself. It had been a while since he was with anyone and more than a while since he had been with Hannibal. He could feel Hannibal's body tensing as well, shuddering with every pump of his hips. He couldn't take it anymore.

"Hannibal, I'm going to come." Will held on to Hannibal tighter, panting. He felt his friend fill him up with his warm cum, indicating that he was unable to wait either.

They laid on the floor, holding onto each other until both finished their much-needed releases. Will looked Hannibal in the eyes, huffing heavily from the moment.

"Would you like to go to bed?" Hannibal whispered. He slowly stroked his friend's forehead, letting his fingers tingle in between dark strands of hair.

Will nodded before letting Hannibal gently pick him up from the floor. They chased each other into Hannibal's room, and humped hard again before sucking each other's cocks and falling asleep after fucking for more than a few hours.

The following morning…

Will slowly opened his eyes. He blinked twice before yawning himself awake. He shut his eyes again, not wanting to confront the morning sun head on; he was still groggy from the lack of sleep the previous night.

He slowly turned onto his back, eyes closed, folding his arms behind to his head to prop himself a little. But as he turned, he realized that he wasn't alone in the bed. Hannibal was lying next to him with his back facing him.

Will shot up in the bed, suddenly remembering that he and Hannibal fucked last night.

Fuck… Will thought to himself, before jumping quickly out of the bed, basically launching himself out into the hallway and into the bathroom.

"Will?" Will heard Hannibal calmly call his name from the bed, but he didn't turn around.

Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck… Will kept saying to himself as soon as the door to the bathroom slammed closed. He sank to the floor, leaned up against the door, and rubbed his temples.

"Will, are you all right?" Hannibal asked, his voice closer to the door this time, indicating that he was standing outside of the bathroom, making sure his friend was okay.

"I'm okay...I-I just...I just need a minute." Will squeaked, then coughed out a deeper sounding tone in order not to betray how incredibly awkward he was feeling at the moment.

I can't believe we fucked last night...what's wrong with me??

"Okay, I'll be in my room if you need me…" Will heard Hannibal's voice trail off.

He hugged the upper half of his body tight against his legs.

But I wanted to...nothing was stopping me…

Will let go of his legs. He had given into his sexual urges...and the sex with Hannibal was amazing.

He let his limbs lay relax against his body, staring up at the mirror. He got up from the floor and slowly approached the sink. He looked at himself in the mirror; why was he being so timid?

If he wanted to be with Hannibal, he should just go for it. Will stared at himself thinking about the best solution to his present issue.

After about five minutes of deep thought, he grinned to himself before leaving the bathroom and walking out into the hallway. He took his time reentering Hannibal's bedroom, finding his friend sitting in the middle of the bed, looking quite concern. Will took his time sliding back into the bed, aware of his friend's trepidation.

However, without notice, Will got on top of Hannibal. He let his hips sink downward and his knees hug Hannibal's sides. Hannibal reached up to rub his arm, gazing at him upward, while Will was still grinning.

"Hannibal?" Will started, taking his time. He wanted to milk the moment as long as he possibly could. He had his best friend in a vulnerable position, and it was thrilling to be the one on control this time, again.

"Yes, Will?" Hannibal answered, still rubbing his friend's arm, waiting impatiently for Will to get to the point.

The average person wouldn't have been able to spot Hannibal's eagerness due to his stoic facade, yet Will could see straight through his best friend's demeanor. He waited while he could sense Hannibal growing restless.

Will smiled and Hannibal slipped by rolling his eyes. Will laughed and Hannibal pulled him closer to his body, silently begging his friend to get to the point.

Will coyly grinned at his best friend. He waited for the perfect second to drop his bomb.

"What do you think about being friends with benefits?"

Part Twenty - Nine

About a week later and the day of Hannibal's visit to Baltimore...

Will sprang out of his bed. His alarm clock was beeping loudly and the light from the late morning sun penetrated his room, forcing him to squint. He heard Winston barking faintly, trying to get his best friend to finally wake up so he could eat breakfast.

What time is it? Will thought to himself, still incredibly groggy from the night before. He felt Winston jump on his bed and nudged him a bit with his nose.

"Hey, buddy. I'm getting up." He responded to Winston's incessant nudging and light yapping with a pat on the head and a quick rub behind the ears.

Will had stayed up most of the night before grading papers...and thinking about Hannibal.

Because …today was the day Hannibal was flying into Baltimore to visit and Will still wasn't prepared to see his former best friend…well he had just assumed they weren't best friends anymore, you know, based on the fight from over a year ago…

All last night, when he wasn't slouched over term papers, cursing to himself for waiting so long to turn semester grades in, he was pacing back and forth, thinking about seeing Hannibal in less than twenty-four hours.

I wonder if he looks the same...of course he does…he always took really good care of himself…I wonder if he thinks a lot about me...probably not...but maybe…?

Will thought about dragging Beverly to the airport with him to greet Hannibal so he wouldn't act painfully awkward, but that would mean he wouldn't get the alone time he had missed with his friend. Also, he didn't need Beverly policing his actions…and it wasn't like he was planning on doing anything, either…

He jumped out of the bed, Winston following closely behind, and headed toward the kitchen. He cleaned out Winston's food bowl before pouring fresh kibble into it. Winston barked happily as he pranced over to the bowl and started eating.

Will leaned up against the counter, using the moment, watching Winston eat, to recover from the lack of sleep.

He looked at his watch. It was 11:30 in the morning and Hannibal's flight was scheduled to arrive around 1:30 pm.

Will sighed, loudly. Winston looked up from his breakfast to make sure his best friend was okay. Will laughed before squatting down to rub Winston behind the ears again.

"I'm okay...just stressed." He reassured Winston.

Will straightened up from the squat before putting his hands on his hips. He could go to the university first to drop off the papers he had finished grading, talk to Jack for a minute or two about upcoming classes, drop off his overnight bag at Molly's, then head out to the airport to wait for Hannibal.

Will sighed again. He wanted to avoid seeing Molly today; something about not being honest from the beginning with her made his stomach turn. Thankfully, he had a key to her apartment and knew she would be out most of the day, so if he timed it right, he would miss her at her place before driving to the airport.

Winston looked up from his food bowl and barked, as if to say, "Get your shit together, Will!" All with a happy dog smile on his face, of course.

Will huffed before walking back to the bathroom to take a shower.

Later that afternoon...

Hannibal: Flight landed early. At baggage claim now.

Will parked his car in the parking garage before glancing down at his phone to see that he had received a message from Hannibal. He gulped then realized that he should probably get out of the car to go find his friend.

He took a quick moment to gather himself, feeling his hands moisten with anticipation, before launching himself out of the driver's seat and dodging other cars to get inside the airport.

Once Will walked into the baggage claim area, his breath immediately hitched. He found Hannibal stooping over a bag, checking the tag to ensure it was his.

...I forgot how attractive he was... Will thought to himself. His body froze; he couldn't move his legs.

The only part of his body that seemed to function properly were his eyes; they slowly followed Hannibal's movements as his friend helped an elderly woman retrieve her bag from the carousel. He smiled at her as she thanked him. Will almost stopped functioning all together when he watched Hannibal smile.

...and his smile...

Hannibal grabbed the bag he was standing over, slung it over his shoulders before turning around. He noticed Will almost instantly.

"Will!" Hannibal cheerily shouted with a small wave.

Will forced his legs to walk toward his friend. He tried to smile back causally, but he was sure he looked nervous. Hannibal didn't seem to notice, however. He put his bag down once Will finally reached him and gave him a hug. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal in response, trying to snap back to reality.

"Hannibal, it's so great to see you." Will managed. He fought the urge to bury his face into the crook of Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal squeezed him back tightly; Will felt a rush of euphoria as he prevented his hands from wandering all over his friend's backside.

After a more-than-five-seconds hug, Hannibal let him go, but kept his hands on Will's arms as if he were trying to get a better look at him. Will averted his eyes a little; he felt his cheeks blush faintly.

"You as well." Hannibal greeted back, slightly grinning. Will looked up at him, then cast his eyes slowly downward to look at the rest of his friend.

...*fuck*... Will thought. He gulped again thinking about the last time he was intimate with Hannibal…

He regained control of himself…well sort of...

"Do you need help with your ball—" Will jerked when he realized what he was saying. "—I-I'm mean bags! Do you need help carrying any of your bags?"

Hannibal seemed slightly amused, but not in a mocking way. He put his hands on his hips and leaned to the side.

"No, I got it. Thank you for taking the time to pick me up, by the way." Hannibal smiled faintly; Will almost went weak in the knees.

"No problem. I'm, uh, parked in the garage." Will responded, fumbling in his pocket, trying to coolly retrieve his keys, but failing miserably.

Will turned around swiftly and felt Hannibal follow him closely behind. They walked toward the garage, musing about the weather and Hannibal's medical conference. Once reaching the car, Will felt somewhat relieved; at least he would have the road to focus on to avoid sounding awkward around Hannibal. They jumped into the car and Will pulled out of the parking garage.

"I don't remember this car from the last time I saw you. New?" Hannibal asked after a few minutes of silence.

Will glanced over to acknowledge that it was. He saw out of the corner of his eye Hannibal running his fingers along the dashboard. Will thought about his friend's fingers caressing something else…

"I actually totaled the last one. I got into a *huge* accident…I think I was in the hospital for a day or two."

Will noticed that Hannibal was gaping back at him, shocked with concerned.

“Ah, I’m all right. I just broke my leg and had a few contusions. My friend Beverly—you remember Beverly?—she took care of me.”

Hannibal reached over to rub Will’s arm closest to him. It felt nice yet jarring. The move almost caused Will to drive off the side of the road.

“My god, Will. You know you could have called me.” Hannibal said after a few seconds of silent arm rubbing.

Will looked down at the hand on his arm and then up at Hannibal. He couldn’t help but gawk at how gorgeous his friend looked; even when Hannibal appeared to be consumed with concerned for him.

Will looked back at the road. “It’s okay, Hannibal. It was after…it happened right after we had that…huge fight on the phone…”

Will thought back to the accident. He had spoken to Hannibal on the phone the night before; the heated exchange during the call had upset him so much that he could barely function the rest of the following day. He hadn’t been paying attention when another car t-boned him on the way to work.

“I still would have answered the phone if you had called.” Hannibal caressed Will’s arm lightly before straightening back up in his seat. “I would have flown out to take care of you as well, but I’m glad you had Beverly.” He stated slowly.

Will could feel Hannibal’s worry radiating from his body and smiled at the admission. He greatly appreciated how caring Hannibal was, even when they went through rough patches in their relationship.

“Thank you, Hannibal…I should have called you.” He admitted.

Silence ensued before Hannibal broke it.

“So, are you seeing anyone?”

Will, for a split second, thought about lying. However, he heard Beverly’s voice in his head, scolding him for not being transparent.

“Yeah…for about a month or so…” Will let out slowly.

“That’s great, Will.” Hannibal said with a genuine smile. He patted Will on the arm, as if his friend had scored a goal of some sort.

Will wasn’t sure how to take Hannibal’s response. Did he still have feelings for him and was trying to play cool about the news? Or did he really not care about who he was fucking now? The last thought hurt Will more than he had imagined it would.

“Yeah, she’s nice…” Will answered. He waited before speaking again. “Are…you seeing anyone…Hannibal?” He really didn’t want to hear the answer, but he knew it would be awkward if he didn’t ask.

“Ah, it’s just an ‘on and off’ sort of thing.” Hannibal waved it off causally. Will tightened his grasp around the steering wheel; he fought back a tinge of jealously. He wondered how long this “on and off” fling had been going on.

Will faked a little chuckle. “Oh…how *long* has that been a thing?” He was trying to come off teasing and not irritated.

...please don’t say it was shortly after we had that fight… Will prayed.

“Hmm…I remember meeting her probably a few weeks after speaking to you for the last time.”

...ugh…fuck... Will took his time. He wanted to end the conversation now, but he couldn’t help himself. He needed to know as much information about Hannibal’s latest paramour.

“*Does* she have a name?” Will managed to say without betraying his annoyance.

“Bedelia. She might be at the conference this weekend, actually.” Hannibal responded.

Will could feel the tips of his ears radiating heat. “So…why…didn’t you just stay with her then?” He attempted to sound playful, but he knew he sounded a little jealous. Hannibal either didn’t seem to notice or didn’t want to make things more awkward by addressing it.

“Like I said, it’s an ‘on and off’ type of a thing.” Hannibal turned his body to face Will. “Besides I wanted to spend my time catching up with you.”

Will felt his heart flutter. Maybe Hannibal did have lingering feelings for him still. Even though they weren’t that close anymore and probably wouldn’t be ever again (considering the fallout from the last time they spoke), Will deeply cared for Hannibal. It was nice to know that maybe Hannibal still cared for him as well.

They spent the rest of the ride in silence. This time the atmosphere around them felt less awkward. About twenty minutes later, Will pulled up in front of his apartment and helped Hannibal carry his bags inside.

“The extra room I have is a little small, but it’s closer to the bathroom, which might be a plus.” Will explained as he unlocked the door and led Hannibal inside. “You can also sleep in my room if this room doesn’t suit you…um...since I’m staying over with my girlfriend...”

Will could feel Hannibal waiting for him to explain the sleeping arrangements. He slowly turned around to face his friend.

“I thought maybe you would feel more comfortable if you had the whole apartment to yourself…” Will had to look away from Hannibal. He wasn’t sure how his friend would take the news.

He felt Hannibal step toward him and caress his arm. “That makes sense, hopefully I’ll still get to spend time with you.”

Will looked Hannibal in the eyes. He knew what he was about to say would only make matters worse, but he didn’t care. Having Hannibal so close to him was a feeling he had greatly missed.

“...maybe I’ll just sleep over at her place tonight…then come back...” He offered, waiting nervously for Hannibal’s reply.

Hannibal waited. Will could feel his friend relishing in the offer. “Well, whatever works for you, of course. I would love to have you around more.”

Will blushed. He had to turn around quickly to get away from how close Hannibal was standing next to his body.

“Um, sure. That should work.” He answered, feeling a little flustered.

Hannibal grinned as he let his eyes wander around Will’s apartment, changing the subject like a pro. “I like your new place. Feels *neat*.”

Will led Hannibal into the extra room, he appreciated the change in topic, although Hannibal was giving him a hard time about his typical messy behavior.

“Ah well, I try.”

Will hung out by the door frame as he felt Hannibal’s body brush past him as he entered the bedroom. Will felt his pants tighten, just a little, by the action; he straightened himself up to regain his composure.

What was that?

He watched Hannibal plop one of his bags onto the bed; he studied Hannibal’s frame, remembering small details he found the most attractive about his friend.

Without notice, Hannibal took his sweater off then his shirt. Will gulped at the sight; he felt his palms moisten and his mouth dry. Hannibal looked over at him and smiled before putting on a fresh shirt.

“Uh…um…I-I’m getting a late lunch with Beverly if you would like to come along. I-I don’t know if you’re tired or not…but I thought to offer just in case you weren’t…” Will struggled through his words. The image of a shirtless Hannibal was imprinted in his mind, clouding his vision.

“Thank you for the offer, but I’m exhausted from the flight, unfortunately.”

Will started to back his way out of the room, waving his hands about nervously. “Oh, that’s all right, Hannibal! I completely understand. We’ll catch up tonight. I’ll bring you something back to eat later when you’re awake...or maybe not...since you’re picky about food...”

Shit, that came off rude…

Hannibal only smiled; he knew his friend was trying to sound playful. “Well thank you. And tonight sounds great. Maybe I’ll make dinner for the two of us.” He responded with a sleepy grin. He put his bag on the floor next to the bed before lying down on top of the sheets. Will smiled back at him.

“You don’t have to do that…” Will answered, rubbing the back of his neck like a nervous wreck.

“I don’t mind.” Hannibal replied with a coy grin, leaning up against the headboard of the bed. His shirt went up a little and Will could see his friend’s naked body again.

Fuck...

Will felt incredibly awkward. He wanted to exit the room as quickly as possible. The sexual tension emerging between himself and Hannibal was too much to handle and he didn’t trust himself.

“Hope you sleep well, I’ll see you in a couple hours.” Will said before closing the door, almost slamming it out of nervousness. He lingered outside the room thinking about Hannibal taking his clothes off in front of him before heading down the hallway.

…fuck me…

Part Thirty

About an hour later...

“Okay, why are you so quiet? You’re acting *really* suspicious.” Beverly questions Will in between bites of her sandwich.

Will only shrugged. He was quiet because he was thinking about Hannibal wanting him to stay over at his place instead of Molly’s during the visit. The way his friend had looked at him was something he had missed greatly and his thoughts were consumed with Hannibal’s smile accompanied by his voice.

Well, whatever works for you, of course. I would love to have you around more.

...Dammit, Hannibal. Will almost doubled over on top of the table, but he stopped himself from making a scene.

God, he’s still incredibly sexy...what the fuck am I going to do?

“Will, oh my *god*, just tell me. What in the world is bothering you?” Beverly rolled her eyes. She knew her friend’s behavior had something to do with Hannibal.

“I’m okay. Just stressed out about this party.” Will lied. Well sort of. While, he was a little stressed out about the faculty party, he was more anxious about his former best friend (and fuck buddy, and maybe, possibly, the future love of his life, but he wasn’t willing to accept that, yet) sleeping in his apartment right now, waiting for him to come home to have dinner with….and catch up on...life...

After Will met up with Beverly a while ago at his favorite sandwich shop on the university’s campus (you remember, the place where they kind of make the same gourmet sandwiches that Hannibal used to make for Will and Abigail’s fishing trips?), he looked on edge. Beverly was immediately concerned that her friend’s plan—being honest with everyone after Hannibal’s visit—was already backfiring.

Ugh, this plan is going to blow up in his face...but what can I do? He’s an adult... Beverly silently thought to herself, watching her friend fidget in his chair.

She decided to take a chance and suss out how Will was feeling at the moment. Maybe she could convince him to be honest early so he would feel less burdened by the ordeal.

“Sooo...how’s Hannibal?” Beverly slowly asked, looking at her friend cautiously, twirling her straw in her water glass.

Will almost choked on his sandwich. He had been so caught up thinking about Hannibal, that he forgot that he hadn’t mentioned anything about him to Beverly when they first sat down to eat.

“Um...he’s fine…” He initially coughed then struggled to recover.

Beverly didn’t answer back immediately. She only stared at her friend, knowing full well something was going on and he was keeping it away from her, so she tried again.

“What do you guys have planned for tonight?” She asked with an eyebrow raised, furtively glancing up from her water glass.

Will shifted in his chair. “Hannibal suggested making dinner so we could...catch up…” He started.

He was now thinking about seeing a bit of Hannibal’s naked body when his friend had stretched out on the bed in his guest room before falling asleep.

Will also thought about the last time they fucked.

Fuck...

“Oh, that should be fun.” Beverly began, then waited about a second before continuing. “...I thought you were staying over at Molly’s tonight?”

Will looked up at her, then down at his hands in his lap. He sighed before he could say anything.

Well, whatever works for you, of course. I would love to have you around more.

“I-I am. We’re just eating dinner.” Will responded, conveniently leaving out the discussion between himself and Hannibal about him staying over at his own place during the weekend.

Um, sure. That should work.

He couldn’t tell Beverly that he had told Hannibal he would only stay at Molly’s the one night; he knew she would give him a hard time, knowing that he wanted to be near Hannibal as much as possible...to possibly fool around with him...

Will shook his head. *No, I’m not going to fool around with Hannibal. I’m only concerned with repairing our friendship. The fooling around part was what tore us apart.*

“Why are you shaking your head?” Beverly inquired, confused as to why her friend was jerking around in his seat, expressing determination on his face.

Will snapped out of his mental wrestle match just enough to appear unbothered. “Nothing. Beverly, I’m fine, okay?”

“Okay, I’m—”

“Will! Beverly!” But before Beverly could complete her sentence, two voices shouted their names from across the cafe. It was Brian and Jimmy.

“Will! Beverly!” Brian shouted once more with Jimmy following him closely behind.

“Oh hey, guys!” Will shouted back, more cheerful than he usually was when he greeted his coworkers and/or friends. Beverly scrunched up her nose at the way her friend was acting. She knew he was using the distraction to avoid talking about Hannibal.

“Brian, do you have to shout across the restaurant? People are trying to eat.” Jimmy quipped as he approached Will and Beverly’s table with Brian.

Brian scrunched up his face, ignoring his friend. “Why didn’t you guys tell us you were getting lunch? We would’ve joined you.” He questioned Will and Beverly, obviously annoyed that no one had contacted him about lunch.

“It’s a late lunch and we didn’t know you guys hadn’t eaten already.” Beverly retorted, watching Jimmy and Brian steal chairs from a neighboring table. The move forced Beverly and Will to scoot their chairs around the other side of the table to make room for the latecomers. Everyone shuffled around a bit until Brian and Jimmy got comfortable.

“These chairs are terrible!” Jimmy sighed, trying to find an acceptable position for his rear.

“So, *how’s* the party planning going, Will?” Brian asked, ignoring Jimmy. He clasped Will’s shoulder hard while jerking him around a bit, playfully referring to the fact that the party planning was probably not going well.

“I haven’t thought about it.” Will sighed, wriggling free from Brian’s hand.

“Will’s best friend is visiting this weekend.” Beverly added, aware that Will was trying to use the distraction to not talk about Hannibal.

She wouldn’t press him further, since the conversations they had had previously were private, but she wanted to let her friend know that she hadn’t forgotten about Will’s plans with Hannibal this weekend.

Will’s eyes widened, pleading from across the table for Beverly to chill on the Hannibal talk. Brian and Jimmy both looked at each other and smirked.

“There’s someone walking around on the planet, living and breathing, an *actual* human being who has enough in common with you to be best friends with, Will? Wow, I gotta meet this person.” Jimmy commented as he picked up a menu to order a sandwich from.

Brian laughed, Beverly faked laughed, and Will frowned.

I’m not that antisocial, am I? Well maybe...

“Is your best friend also into that serial killer show you like so much?” Brian asked, jerking Will around again.

Everyone was trying to playfully tease their socially awkward coworker/friend who they all once voted on (as a joke) most likely to lead a double life as a serial killer. Will was fine with the teasing most of the time, but anything related to Hannibal was bugging the shit out of him.

Beverly noticed Will's uncomfortable expression, so she jumped in to save him, sort of. "Will's best friend's name is Hannibal Lecter. He's attending some medical conference here this weekend and apparently he's a great chef."

Both Jimmy and Brian "oohh'd" and "awww'd" at Beverly's description of Hannibal.

"He sounds *very* attractive." Jimmy chimed in. Brian grinned, Beverly chuckled a little, and Will faked a slight smile. He wasn't in the mood to talk about how attractive his best friend was...he already knew that.

What, stop it, Will! You're just friends...

"Do you know him, Beverly?" Brian asked with a coy grin, side eyeing Will.

"I met him once or twice before, right Will?" Beverly asked, she noticed that Will was nervously fidgeting in his chair; she could sense that her friend was growing uncomfortable with the topic.

Will nodded back as best as he could. He was extremely uncomfortable with the topic. He wished everyone would just shut up about Hannibal, but then again, only acting more awkward during the discussion would only prompt the others to badger him even further.

"I want to meet him. Is he coming to the party?" Jimmy asked, almost sounding a little whiny that Beverly had met Will's mysterious best friend and he hadn't yet.

"*Chill*, Jimmy, he's seeing someone and yes, he'll be at the party." Will quipped with a grin before taking a sip of his water, forcing himself to appear nonchalant about everyone hammering him about Hannibal.

Everyone around the table laughed, except for Jimmy. "I didn't sound that desperate! Besides I was only asking an innocent question…" He slumped down into his chair a little while Brian laughed loudly.

Will continued to laugh with everyone else at Jimmy's expense, but then he reminded himself that Hannibal was seeing someone... well sort of seeing someone...someone named...Bedelia...

What do you expect? Of course, Hannibal is only sort of seeing someone. He's like that with everyone…

I wonder what she's like...she's probably the opposite of me...

Will stopped laughing as his coworkers ignored his now solemn attitude and continued to make fun of each other.

Just another reason why we're only good as friends…

Or used to be...

Will's thoughts turned to the last time he had sex with Hannibal.

That night Will had been trying to fight his emotions ever since they arrived home from the airport. Hannibal was doing his best to console him but finding out the next morning that his best friend was seeing someone he had gone out with prior without mentioning so beforehand, coupled with the death of his mother, was more than Will could comprehend. However, Hannibal was the only person he felt close enough with to be vulnerable in front of.

Can I do or get you anything?

No...I just want to be close to you…

Will had been crying in his room, feeling the world close in on him, when Hannibal came in to check up on him after giving his friend a few minutes to himself. After letting Will cry into his chest for a moment, Hannibal then let Will take advantage of the opportunity and give into his feelings. That was the last time they had sex and Will thought about it constantly, more frequently now since Hannibal contacted him last week.

That also was the only time Will could remember, outside of the first time they had sex together, that he almost told Hannibal that he loved him. However, admitting to Hannibal that he loved him would only ruin the basis of their "best friends with benefits" deal and he feared the admission would also cost him his relationship with his closest friend.

"Will! Are you all right?" It was Beverly. She was trying to get his attention while he drifted off into his memories.

Will shook his head. "Um what?"

"I said, what are your plans for the party?" Brian said, apparently repeating himself with slight annoyance.

"I said I haven't thought about it, Brian." Will repeated himself, but not remembering having done so before taking a sip from his water, equally annoyed.

Brian shrugged then grinned. "Not at all? Well Jimmy and I can run your bar."

"I'll run the bar." Jimmy chimed in.

"I already said that was fine." Will added.

"You should get *your friend* to cook for us, since he's a chef and all." Brian smirked. The emphasis on "your" and "friend" bothered Will a little, but of course the only person who knew about him and Hannibal was Beverly (oh and his ex-girlfriend, I suppose).

"Just make sure to get Kade super drunk. She's funnier...well not as terrible, if she's been drinking." Jimmy piped in with a curt laugh from Beverly.

"Ugh, at least by forcing these 'gatherings' on us, we get to drink." Brian rolled his eyes.

"Jack's hilarious when he's been drinking. Just thought I'd mention that." Beverly added with a sly grin. Everyone around the table bobbed their heads up and down in agreement, chuckling about how goofy Jack was during the last party.

“Hannibal’s visiting, he’s not going to want to cook for all of us.” Will sighed.

“Well then who’s going to prepare the food? You?” Jimmy quipped, indicating Will with a slight tilt of the head and lowering of the eyes.

Everyone laughed again. “I’m not that terrible. I helped Molly make dinner a few times.” Will retorted.

“Oh yeah, is your girlfriend going to be at the party?” Brian asked, leaning backward in his chair to look at Will directly.

“Of course.” Will added meekly, averting his gaze as if Brian was burning a hole in the middle of his head.

“What does she think of your best friend?” Jimmy asked, wholly unaware of what Will had been struggling with the last week and a half since Hannibal emailed him out the blue.

Both Will and Beverly looked at each other, silent.

“They haven’t met yet...she’s going to meet him this weekend…” Will responded. He felt the tips of his ears heating up with anxiousness.

Both Jimmy and Brian looked at each other as if they were completely confused as to why Will’s girlfriend hadn’t met his best friend yet.

“Hannibal lives in New York. And you know that Will and Molly just started dating.” Beverly remarked with a fake smirk, trying to save Will from the awkwardness brewing in their circle.

Jimmy and Brian looked at each other again, seemingly convinced by Beverly’s answer.

“Oh well that makes sense.” Jimmy commented.

“Now she can meet him with the rest of us.” Brian smirked.

Will looked at Beverly from across the table to thank her silently. She nodded back slightly before taking another bite out of her sandwich. The conversation ended naturally as the four moved onto other topics. Will tried to pay attention, but all he could think about was when Hannibal would finally meet Molly…

Later that evening...

Will had stayed out later past lunch time with Beverly, Jimmy, and Brian, talking about the politics at Johns Hopkins, and the party again, ending with a heated discussion about behavioral genetics.

After an hour or so, he finally got back to his apartment, taking his time unlocking the door. He wasn't sure if Hannibal was still asleep; he remembered his friend only taking naps for less than an hour, if any, when they had roomed together.

Will slowly opened the door, glanced around for any sign of Hannibal, before walking down the hallway toward his bedroom. He stopped when he heard the shower running. Will walked up to the bathroom door and waited, listening to Hannibal take a shower.

He placed a hand on the hard wood door, letting his fingers trace the grooves. Will sighed before turning around so that his back was propped up against the door. He could still hear the shower running; he closed his eyes and thought about the few times he had sex with Hannibal in the shower.

He could remember vividly one particular time when Hannibal had brought him along to a conference in Chicago for a few days. They had shared a room and whenever they weren't attending the conference events or exploring the city, they were fucking in their hotel.

Will closed his eyes even tighter, lightly caressing his own body while imagining Hannibal touching him, letting his hand make its way toward his crotch.

He moaned faintly thinking about being in his shower with Hannibal...

Part Thirty - One

Besides being physically intimate, we both know each other better than we know ourselves...how could you ignore the fact that that makes us lovers?

Suddenly, before Will's thoughts go could any further, the bathroom door slammed into the back of his head. He fell over on all fours, hurriedly trying to gather himself.

"Will? Are you all right?" Will felt Hannibal touch his shoulder and then attempt to help him up to a standing position.

Oh my god, I hope he didn't see me!

Will felt Hannibal take a hold of his arm, but he yanked himself away, incredibly embarrassed that his best friend had almost caught him masturbating by the bathroom door.

Hannibal let Will pull away from him. This time, despite his keen sense of awareness, Hannibal had not seen his friend masturbating in front of the bathroom door. He was shocked to see Will hanging out by the door yet intrigued that he had been doing so.

"Sorry, I didn't see you there." Hannibal smirked. He could not only see how embarrassed Will was by his actions, but he could also feel his friend's awkwardness. Part of him missed Will's little social quirks. Well, actually, that was a big part of their relationship he had missed the most.

Will backed away toward the other side of the hallway, pressing himself flat along the wall, arms crossed, face beet red.

"U-uhh…sorry, I was trying to get to get to my room and…I must've...walked too close...to the door…" Will stammered, trying to come up with a plausible reason as to how the bathroom door rammed into his body.

Hannibal grinned. He knew Will wasn't telling the truth. Will had been facing away from the door, not facing down the hallway, but he thought it might be best not to give Will a hard time about it…well maybe just a little tease would be okay given the moment.

"You weren't listening to me take a shower, were you? I promise there's still hot water left, if you would like one as well."

Hannibal kept grinning as he placed his hands on his hips and leaned slightly to the side.

Will blushed again, trying to avert his eyes away from Hannibal. He finally noticed that his friend wasn't wearing anything except for a towel around his waist.

Fuck…

“I-I…um...I’m fine.” Will mumbled. He finally gained enough courage to look at Hannibal, who was still smiling. He could tell his friend was only teasing him a little, which was one aspect of their relationship he had missed…well actually it was the biggest thing Will had missed about Hannibal.

Hannibal chuckled before brushing past Will to get to the guest room. Will flinched, thinking about the same encounter from not too long ago this past afternoon.

What the fuck, Hannibal?

“Let me get dressed and we can catch up.” Hannibal said behind him, taking his time closing the door, as if he were lingering an invite for Will to join him while he got dressed.

Will only stared back, waiting anxiously for the door to close. He wanted to go into the room, but he knew that would only lead to “you-know-what,” so he stayed put.

“Okay, I’ll just be out in the living room.” Will tried to smile back at Hannibal, but due to the combination of almost getting off while listening to Hannibal shower in conjunction with almost getting caught forced his smile into a half grimace. Hannibal didn’t say anything, he only winked back before closing the door.

Will sprinted into the living room and plopped down on the couch. He sighed heavily before leaning forward onto his knees with the tips of his elbows, burying his face into his hands.

What the fuck am I going to do??

Will sighed again before leaning up against the couch. He had no clue what he was going to do; he knew living around Hannibal would be somewhat difficult these next few days, but he didn’t think the tension would be palpable within the first few hours. All that work, trying to convince himself that his only mission was to repair his relationship with his best friend, felt totally wasted.

Imagining Hannibal in the shower, touching himself, Hannibal touching him a little whenever he walked past him...all of it was way too much.

Maybe I should stay with Molly the whole visit, I don’t think I can handle this.

He also couldn’t figure out Hannibal’s motive; considering the way their friendship had ended the last time they saw each other and the silence that had followed, Will had been under the impression, for a while, that Hannibal didn’t want to have anything to do with him.

However, Will kind of understood Hannibal wanting to reconcile, so the email out of the blue proposing a visit sort of made sense, but his friend’s behavior now suggested that maybe Hannibal still had feelings for him…

Or he was just being Hannibal.

He probably does the same shit with Cordelia, or whatever the fuck her name is…

“So, what would you like to eat for dinner or are you not hungry yet?” Hannibal appeared in the living room, leaning up against the opened archway, fully clothed, grinning as if he knew how sexy he looked.

Will glanced over at his friend, taking a second to answer so he wouldn’t sound like a babbling idiot like before.

“We could cook something small...I guess I could eat. You also don’t have to make anything, Hannibal.” Will slowly straightened up from the couch. He brushed imaginary lint off his pants before taking a step backward to walk into the kitchen.

Hannibal took his time following his friend into the space; he was well aware of Will’s hesitancy about seeing each other again after a whole year of not speaking to one another.

“You know I don’t mind.” Will felt Hannibal place a hand on his shoulder. He had to fight the urge to lean backward; he could feel his friend standing closely behind him.

Will stayed facing away from Hannibal. He couldn’t stand how close he was to him…but he really faced away out of fear of doing something stupid and ruining his entire plan, possibly losing his girlfriend, and Hannibal, again.

“Only if you want to.” Will meekly answered, still facing away.

He decided to do something besides acting incredibly awkward, so he gently wiggled free from Hannibal before walking over to the cabinets to retrieve two wine glasses. He proceeded to pour the both of them two glasses of red wine, all the while facing away from Hannibal, but aware that his friend was watching him closely.

Will turned around with the glasses and handed one to Hannibal. “Thank you.” Hannibal said, taking the glass while also brushing his hand up against Will’s.

Dammit, Hannibal. Stop doing that!

Will backed away a bit before raising his glass to toast, to what, he wasn’t entirely sure (maybe having the restrain not to fuck his best friend, yet …?)

“Thank you for coming to visit, Hannibal.” Will managed through a forced smile.

“No, thank *you* for allowing me to spend time with you. I really did miss you.” Hannibal replied.

“Cheers.” He clinked Will’s glass and Will tried to replicate the action, but his mind was hung up on the phrase “I really did miss you.”

“Cheers.” Will answered, his voice soft with apprehension.

They both stood in the kitchen, waiting through growing silence, Will thinking about saying “I missed you, too”, but deciding against it, and Hannibal smiling at his friend as if he could read his thoughts.

Will stood awkwardly, trying to figure out the best way to end his uncomfortableness when he thought about Abigail.

“Abigail’s been asking about you.” Will said through a now genuine smile. He knew any talk regarding Abigail would ease the tension between the two men. They both cared about her so he knew Hannibal would be interested in seeing how she was doing.

“Really? I haven’t heard from her since over a year ago.” Hannibal replied, showing that he was happy to hear about Abigail.

Will nodded, but then blushed. The reason why Hannibal hadn’t heard from Abigail was his fault; she didn’t know where Hannibal had moved to in New York after the fight so she would constantly ask Will how Hannibal was doing. She also didn’t know about that fight, just that they didn’t live together anymore.

She would ask Will to send a letter from her to Hannibal, but Will would make up some bullshit reason as to why he couldn’t do that. After Hannibal emailed him about visiting, he finally gave in and told Abigail that he would see him.

Will took another sip from his wine before leading Hannibal into his room. For a split second, Will thought letting Hannibal into his room while he was in it was probably not the best choice, but they wouldn’t do anything. They’re just friends.

Once they entered the bedroom, Hannibal sat on Will’s bed, when he could have sat in the chair that was next to the desk. Will tried not to react to the move as he rummaged through the papers on his desk until he found some handwritten letters sent by Abigail.

They both heard barking from the hallway as Winston ran into the bedroom and jumped onto Hannibal’s lap.

“Oh, you let him out from the back?” Will asked, almost forgetting that he and Hannibal had both adopted Winston when they lived together in New York.

Winston nuzzled his nose into Hannibal’s face. “He was barking after you left, so I let him out for a bit. He was sleeping in my room up until now.” Hannibal smiled as Winston licked his face with excitement, completely ignoring Will.

Will watched the two, perched up against his desk with his arms folded. He smiled back, thinking about how he had to convince Hannibal in the first place to even consider getting a dog. Now he and Winston were picking up from where they had left off as if Hannibal had never left.

They’re so cute.

Will playfully cleared his throat. Hannibal looked up from nuzzling Winston back.

Will walked up to the bed. “She emails me once in a while, but she also sends me handwritten letters.” He handed Hannibal one of the letters. He cautiously made his way back to the desk, avoiding the urge to sit on the bed with both Winston and Hannibal.

“I told her you were visiting this weekend,” Will added, “she’s very excited. We should call her later.”

Hannibal looked through the letters, stopping to open one to look through more thoroughly. Will watched his friend read the letter; part of him felt horrible for not being honest with Abigail about him and Hannibal not speaking to each other. He knew he needed to apologize; Hannibal had formed a tight bond with Abigail, and it was cruel of him to keep her away from him.

“I never told her about...our fight...she didn’t know where you lived when she wrote those letters...but I’m sure she’s figured out that something happened between the two of us…” Will stated slowly. He was searching for the right words to say; this was the first time he and Hannibal had spoken out loud about the fight.

“I assumed as much...however, given the circumstances, I don’t blame you.” Hannibal answered. He was looking directly up at Will while holding Winston in a half hug and Abigail’s letter in the other hand.

Will nodded, crossing his arms further, as if he were trying to give himself a hug. He wanted to embrace Hannibal; the moment felt like a necessary lead into the talk they desperately needed to have about the fight.

“...Hannibal...I-I’m sorry…” Will started. He could feel his eyes swelling up with warm tears. He knew he would get emotional if he and Hannibal ever discussed the fight face to face, but he didn’t think he would get this upset.

Will leaned up against the desk, waiting anxiously for Hannibal’s response, looking down at his feet. From the depth of the fallout, Will had been sure that they would never be the best friends they had been prior.

After what felt like an eternity, Will felt a hand linger on his shoulder before squeezing it. “Will, I’m sorry for behaving the way that I did. I should have listened to your concerns.”

The urge to hug Hannibal again came back with full force as Will tilted his head up to look at his friend. He knew he looked silly; his face was red and his eyes were watery, but he also knew Hannibal didn’t care.

He felt Hannibal step closer toward him, hesitating before leaning inward to give him a hug.

Fuck, fuck, fuck. Don’t do that!

Will felt Hannibal hug him briefly then pull away. Will stayed where he was, a little flustered by feeling Hannibal’s body up against his own again. This hug was different from the one at the airport; it was obvious that the two were still weird around each other, but they had been friends, so hugging each other when they greeted wasn’t a big deal.

Now, though, after seeing Hannibal in his apartment, playing with Winston, thinking about him in the shower, talking about Abigail, apologizing to one another about the fight...Will knew any physical contact could possibly lead to sex.

Will sighed. A piece of him was glad it didn't; he didn't want to ruin the weekend by messing around with Hannibal. Yet, of course, part of him wanted to fuck around with his friend. The thought popped into his mind constantly, and he couldn't avoid it.

Will's thoughts were dashed from Winston barking loudly about wanting to go outside to the back.

"Winston, calm down. I'll take you out in a second." Hannibal answered, walking back to the bed to rub Winston's head.

Will chuckled as Hannibal maneuvered Winston off the bed before walking him toward the back of the apartment. Will followed them out of his room before turning in the opposite direction to enter the guest room. As he entered the room, he noticed that Hannibal's bag was sitting in the middle of the floor, wide open. Will stepped closer and spotted a manila envelope sticking out the bag labeled "Florence".

Will, not being able to control his curiosity, made sure Hannibal wasn't on his way back before lunging forward then downward to grab the envelope.

Florence? He still went on that trip? Will thought. He could feel his emotions bubbling up to the surface.

Maybe he went by himself?

Will slowly opened the envelope, looking back behind him at the door, watching for Hannibal. He pulled out a few photographs of his friend taking selifes with some blonde woman. They looked happy.

What. The. Fuck?

Will heard Hannibal talking to him from the hallway.

"So, what do you want for dinner? Will?"

Before Will answered, he fumbled around trying to slide the photos back into the envelope without wrinkling them. He placed the envelope back into the bag where he thought he had found it and hopped onto the bed.

"In here! And we'll just order in. You just got here!" Will replied shuffling on top of the covers, trying not to look suspicious, even though lurking around Hannibal's things while he wasn't present was suspicious enough.

Hannibal entered the room and observed Will lying on the bed with his arms crossed. He looked at his friend then back down at his bag. Will prayed Hannibal wouldn't notice the envelope.

Hannibal smiled, crossing his arms. Of course, he had detected that the envelope was a couple degrees off from its original position.

"Nonsense. What would you like to eat?"

Part Thirty - Two

Chapter Notes

> I'm sorry I've been MIA with this story. I recently moved and I sort of lost my inspiration. But I'm back and super determined to finish it! Thank you for those who checked up on me to make sure I was okay and thank you for those who are continuing to read. I hope you enjoy this latest update.
>
> --lady_slice

The next day...

I love you, Will.

“Will?”

...I love you too, Hannibal...

“Will, are you listening to me?”

What? I can’t believe I just said that...

Will had been so caught up in his thoughts, thinking about a very intimate night between himself and Hannibal, that he didn’t realize that he was leaning too hard into the shopping cart he was in charge of steering. The cart slipped away from him, jerking him back into reality, but before he could face plant onto the store floor, Hannibal grabbed his arm, pulling him up into a standing position. Will yelped before realizing that Hannibal was holding onto him.

“I forgot how absent minded you can be at times.” Hannibal chuckled as he lingered his grip on his friend’s arm before pulling away to let Will gather himself.

Will smiled back faintly, nodding his head slightly in agreement...well because Hannibal was right.

“...I guess you’re right about that…” Will laughed a little, leaning into Hannibal’s grip before reluctantly pulling away.

He stepped to the side and brushed himself off as if he got dirt all over his clothes. He could feel his face heating up; he hated rehashing the past with Hannibal in his head. The thoughts always forced him into awkward situations.

“I’m always right, remember?” Hannibal smirked before resting his hands on his hips. Will pretended to look away from his friend as if something else had caught his attention. Hannibal’s smile was too much for him to handle after thinking about one of the times they were acting close but not fucking.

Fuck...

Will and Hannibal had spent most of the morning and early afternoon prepping for the faculty party. Last night, Will had complained about the forced social gathering, but told his friend that he didn’t have to spend his free time helping him with this asinine party, but Hannibal had insisted. Will had been relieved because he knew he wouldn’t be able to pull off preparing for a party in a few days, and also, he missed organizing social gatherings with Hannibal, even though that was completely out of character for him…

I can’t believe I miss running around with Hannibal to prepare for a dinner party...I use to hate these things...

Back when they were roommates, Will dreaded every single party Hannibal agreed to host at their place. Even the very thought of having to prep their apartment for a bunch of people, socializing with everyone, and then cleaning the apartment before going to bed was torture for Will.

But now, while making plans with Hannibal for this upcoming party and spending the whole day talking about table arrangements and the color scheme for the napkins, Will had questioned himself why he had hated hosting parties with Hannibal. He missed this specific bonding time. Hell, he even missed it whenever Hannibal picked out his clothes for him…

Ugh, I miss this.

“So, I was saying that I believe I have everything I need to prepare the desserts tonight to preserve until the party.” Hannibal continued where he had left off before rescuing his friend from smacking his head on the ground.

Will nodded, still not really listening to Hannibal speak to him. All he could think about right now was Hannibal taking the time to choose the right outfit for him before finishing the prep for the party.

Maybe he’ll do the same this time around?...I wouldn’t mind that, actually.

“Will. I know you’re not listening to me.” Hannibal grinned before stopping in front of the cart to get his friend to look at him. He held onto cart, peering directly into Will’s eyes; an intense stare that made Will blush.

“I’m listening. You said something about desserts.” Will replied, rubbing the back of his neck, now embarrassed that he was seemingly caught thinking about his friend touching his body while helping him put on a nice casual dress shirt.

“I said I have everything I need to prepare the desserts tonight to preserve until the party. Would you like to do that before going to bed tonight?” Hannibal repeated, smiling down at

Will, still directly across the cart.

"...Um...well...that would be...fine...I guess…"

...before going to bed tonight? Did he just say that?

We'll finish setting up the living room before going to bed tonight. I figured we could get it out of the way.

Hannibal's proposition reminded Will of one of the many nights he had to stay up later than he had wanted to in order to get ready for a dinner party the following night.

Or, we could just go to bed now. Will also remembered wrapping his arms around his best friend's waist in an attempt to drag him to one of their bedrooms to fuck instead.

We're almost done. I promise. And he also remembered the way Hannibal had looked at him, returning the embrace, pulling him in for a quick kiss.

Will winced to himself. Back then, they were supposed to be acting like "friends with benefits", but at times they acted like loving boyfriends. This was what had partly prompted Hannibal to say that he loved Will while they were having sex once. Will said it back, forgetting that he was supposed to resist falling in love with Hannibal because, as you already know, he thought any type of romantic relationship with his best friend would lead to them breaking up and never hearing from each other ever again. And Will also thought that Hannibal slept around; feelings and concerns really based on speculation and fear out believing that someone like Hannibal would never love him.

Suddenly, Will's phone vibrated loudly from a phone call. He struggled to retrieve his phone, afraid that the call was from Molly.

Will looked at his phone. It was Molly.

Fuck...

Hannibal noticed that Will was fumbling around with his phone, hesitating to answer it.

"Are you going to answer your phone?" He asked with a coy grin. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see that the screen on Will's phone was lit up with Molly's name and phone number.

Will shook his head before stuffing his phone into his pants' pocket. "Uh, no it's okay. I'll answer if they call back." He wasn't aware that Hannibal could see that Molly had been calling him.

Why didn't I say that it was Molly calling me? Also…why didn't I just answer the phone…?

"I suppose if it's important, *they* will call back." Hannibal answered, putting extra emphasis on the word "they" to drive home the point that he knew it was Molly trying to get a hold of Will.

Will didn't get the hint because he too busy analyzing why he was being weird about talking to Molly in front of Hannibal. He pushed the cart past his friend, attempting awkwardly to change the subject.

"So, you said you have everything you need? Let's go back to my place so we can eat dinner and prep your desserts." Will smiled at Hannibal as he passed by with the cart. He knew his face was red from ignoring Molly's phone call in front of his friend.

I hope he buys that and doesn't ask me again…

Hannibal lingered, watching Will slowly push the cart while painfully waiting for him to respond.

"Sure. You're in charge." Hannibal finally answered, resting an arm on Will's shoulders. Will's face got even redder, if you could think that was possible. He basically resembled a very ripe tomato.

Will maneuvered his way out from underneath Hannibal's arm and sped up walking with the cart.

"Come on. We're dragging our feet." He playfully shouted behind himself, but inside he was reeling from Hannibal touching him the way that he had.

About an hour later...

Will's phone rang again. It was Molly. He was in the middle of putting away the groceries with Hannibal when his phone practically vibrated out of his pocket. He looked over at Hannibal as if silently asking for permission to interrupt their personal time by talking to his girlfriend.

"I don't mind, Will. Take your time." Hannibal smirked.

Will accepted the call after returning the smile. "Hello?"

"Hey, I've been trying to get a hold of you all day, silly." Molly chuckled through the receiver. Will grimaced while trying to hold his smile, mostly because he was nervous about having a phone conversation with Molly in front of Hannibal.

This isn't weird. Besides, they're both going to meet each other soon…

"Yeah, sorry," Will laughed nervously, "I didn't realize that you had called me until I got home." Once Will uttered the lie to his girlfriend, he winced before looking at Hannibal. Hannibal looked to be too busy putting away the ingredients to be listening to the call.

Will continued to look at Hannibal. He knew his friend had caught him looking at his phone back in the grocery store, but he was sure that Hannibal didn't see that the calls had been from Molly…or did he?

Fuck, he knows…

"That's okay. I figured you would be busy with Hannibal. How's your friend by the way? Did his flight get in okay? Are you two planning anything fun tonight?"

Will gulped. The barrage of questions from Molly felt like an intense interrogation under a menacing flickering light.

He laughed nervously again, still training his eyes on Hannibal, who was now leaning up against a counter checking a list he had made for the party.

"I think we might make some desserts for this party tonight."

"Oh...Hannibal's helping you with the party?" Molly sounded defeated. Will had forgotten that she had wanted to help him.

"Oh yeah, he volunteered to make the food, but you can still help if you want." Will tried to recover.

Fuck…

He knew his next sentence would only make the situation worse.

"...by the way…" Will glanced back over at Hannibal before continuing. He turned his back toward his friend and took a deep breath, "I think I'm going to stay here tonight…"

Will waited through a brief awkward pause. He could tell Molly wasn't happy, but he knew she wouldn't make a big deal out of it.

"I guess that makes sense…you should try to spend as much time with your best friend as you can...since you two haven't seen each other in a while and he has his conference…"

"Yes!" Will's voice croaked with unnecessary enthusiasm that Molly had agreed with the decision. He peered behind himself to see if Hannibal was listening, but his friend still looked like he was ignoring the conversation.

"I mean, you're right. Um, you're not disappointed, are you?" Will calmed himself down; he needed to quell his over eagerness. He knew it would only make Molly suspicious. But she didn't need to be; he's just spending the night with Hannibal...in separate rooms…

"Well, do I have any choice?" Will heard Molly chuckle a bit through the receiver, or try to anyway. She didn't have any reason to suspect otherwise beyond their friendship since he hadn't been honest about Hannibal yet. But something about the way her nervous laughter ended her last sentence made Will feel uneasy.

Does she know? Maybe Beverly hinted at something...no...Beverly wouldn't do anything like that...it's mine shit I have to deal with….but still…

"I'll make it up to you, I promise."

Another curt pause ensued as Will anxiously waited for Molly to be okay with all of this.

"...I know. Hope you have a good night, I won't keep you." She said, her voice betraying her disappointment.

"Goodnight, Molly." Will answered before ending the call.

Hannibal stayed silent. He figured it was probably best to leave the subject alone given he how could feel his friend's tension from the call. After a moment or so, he walked over to Will to face him, expertly changing the subject again. For the better?...I guess you'll be the judge of that.

"I know you hate these things, but would you like to go with me to a reception for the conference tomorrow night?" Hannibal asked, resting his hand on Will's shoulder.

Will had to prevent himself from stepping closer toward his friend. The way Hannibal looked at him in the moment was sweeping him up into his feelings again. Then Will thought about the woman his friend was apparently seeing.

"You don't want to go with...Bedelia? That's her name, right?" Will smirked as he crossed his arms. He thought back to that manila envelope in Hannibal's travel bag.

"She'll be there anyway, so I'm inviting you." Hannibal smirked back, almost mimicking his friend's posture.

Will wiggled free from his friend's grasp. He turned around to walk out of the kitchen toward the hallway, stopping short of the entrance.

"I *guess* I could go. Why not? It's been a while...you know...since we've gone anywhere together..."

Hannibal smiled before stepping closer toward Will. He was almost across the room from his friend, but the move prompted Will to step backward into the hallway as if Hannibal were in his personal space about to kiss him or something like that.

"Um, what time is it tomorrow?" Will put his hands into his pocket as he rocked back and forth on his feet thinking about how to get away from Hannibal as quickly as possible.

"Seven. I have an event I must attend before, but if you would like to go together, I could take a taxi back to your place first."

Will scrunched up his face before shaking his head "no". He had just assumed that they would arrive at this party together, since they were going together. He really didn't feel like showing up without Hannibal and then having to find him through a sea of unfamiliar faces,

but then again he also didn't want to force Hannibal to have to come back to his apartment as if they were dating...or whatever.

"No that's okay. I can meet you there. I don't mind…" Will started, trailing off purposely to show that he was a little annoyed with Hannibal leaving him to show up at this reception alone.

Hannibal stepped closer toward Will. "You are my date, so I don't mind coming back to get you."

Will's face hardened as he clenched his jaw. *Date?*

"I can handle myself, Hannibal. Besides, your *real* date will already be there." Will almost snapped back before catching himself sounding more bitter than he knew he could.

"Will, relax. I was teasing you." Hannibal was now standing in the living room space, leaning up against the couch with his arms crossed.

Will sighed to himself. Now the situation was beyond awkward. Will cursed to himself, trying to think of the best thing to say.

"And I'm sure she won't mind." Hannibal added, sort of saving the conversation, but actually a little taken aback with Will's behavior. He had figured since he had arrived that Will still had feelings for him; his friend's actions had suggested so. Yet, he didn't think the issue with Bedelia would be this tense.

Hannibal stepped closer, but this time Will didn't recoil. They were still far apart from each other, however.

"If you don't want to go, you don't have to. I thought maybe this would give us more time to spend with each other. But I understand if you rather not."

Will sighed. He hated it whenever Hannibal tried to look out for his best interest. Hannibal had always done so as long as they knew each other. Well, he only hated it after they started having sex...before, he appreciated having someone look out for him, but now it felt like he was squabbling with his boyfriend.

"Hannibal, please don't do that...you're not my boyfriend…" Will instantly regretted the words as they spilled out of his mouth.

Hannibal waited before replying, expression stoic, while Will almost fainted from making an ass of himself in front of his best friend.

"Hannibal...I-I…I'm—" Will stammered, beginning a walk toward Hannibal with his hands out.

"It's all right. I know what you meant." Hannibal only stared back at Will. Will recognized the look as the same one Hannibal had given him when he told his best friend that he was choosing his ex-girlfriend over him from a year ago.

“Hannibal, I’m sorry. I think I’m tired. I want to go with you. And I am really fine with meeting you there, okay?”

At this point, Will was face to face with Hannibal. He still had his hands out, but wasn’t sure he should touch his friend.

Hannibal stared back at him, waiting for Will to decide what to do. Will stepped forward before placing one hand on Hannibal’s shoulder. He looked up at Hannibal and faked a smile. He couldn’t believe how upset he had just gotten. Maybe he was annoyed about possibly running into Bedelia…

Besides, Hannibal wanted him to go with him to the party…maybe that was a sign…of what, Will wasn’t sure...he still wasn’t sure what he was hoping for.

Hannibal kept his hands to himself, which surprised Will. He figured this would end in a hug, but then thought maybe that wasn’t the best idea. He could feel the sexual tension, but he needed to reassure his friend that he was okay.

“I apologize for teasing you. I’m glad you’ll be there.” Hannibal answered softly.

They both looked at each other, before Hannibal backed away. “I’m going to take a quick shower. Then I can prepare dinner for the both of us.” He smiled at Will before walking past him toward the hallway.

Will took his time turning around. After all, honestly, he really had hoped that their tension ended in a hug...or something…

“Okay, let me help you.” He replied, forcing a smile.

Hannibal grinned before disappearing down the hallway. Will sighed heavily after he heard the guest room door open and close. He leaned up against the couch and slapped his forehead.

What the fuck am I doing?

Part Thirty - Three

Chapter Notes

I would like to dedicate this chapter and the next (even though the entire work is already gifted to them) to my good friend and fellow Mads lover, Evertonem.

Please don't kill me if I give you a heart attack. Love yas ! :p

Thanks for reading !

--lady_slice

Later that night...

Sleep well, Will.

Will groaned. He could hear his phone vibrating loudly and all he wanted to do was sleep as long as possible. He flipped over onto the other side of his body, attempting to drown out the pulsing vibrations by smothering his face with a pillow.

I'm so exhausted...I just want to sleep!

So...when will I meet Molly? Hannibal had asked Will the question earlier that night while they finished prepping the dessert.

The question had surprised Will a little. In truth, he had forgotten about Molly (briefly) when the two were talking about the reception. During their very tense…"conversation," Will felt himself reverting back to his previous faux "friends with benefits" attitude toward Hannibal; where the two of them, as was mentioned before, acted more like long term boyfriends than platonic best friends who have known each other since they were young.

Um...probably before the party? Will reminded himself again that Molly had wanted them all to go out for dinner one night, but part of him wanted to keep both Hannibal and Molly separated until he figured out the best way to handle the situation. He knew his actions would only make Molly more suspicious, if she wasn't already, so he had to act quickly. And honestly, a small part of him enjoyed the alone time with his best friend.

I was thinking maybe I could give a short cooking tutorial before the party on Sunday. Nothing too complicated, I need a few sous chefs to help with the hors d'oeuvres. You should invite Molly and Beverly.

...I guess that could work...Molly also mentioned wanting to get dinner with us Monday night, but you don't have to...I know how you are about other people's cooking…

I would love to, actually. Tell her we should.

...okay...

Great. Can't wait to meet her.

Will gritted his teeth, still ignoring his phone, or trying to anyway. *Can't wait to meet her?" What the hell did he mean?*

The vibrations from Will's texting app were so great that the phone fell of the edge of the bed. Well, the unavoidable fall was mostly due to Will not properly placing his phone on his night stand before turning in for the night; he had been so tired from running errands with Hannibal all day and exhausted from revisiting his relationship with his best friend, that all Will could do was collapse onto his bed, welcoming a flood of sleepiness, his phone bouncing out of his hand on impact.

Why am I getting so many messages right now??

He groaned again as he searched around for his phone before discovering it on the floor next to his bed. He reached down slowly, cursing every single inch of painstaking movement awakening him from desired sleep, before flipping his phone over to see who was bothering him this late at night. It was Beverly.

Shit, I was supposed to call her.

Beverly had sent Will a stream of messages starting that evening after Will finally answered Molly's call. Will had turned off his phone after talking to Molly to "focus" on making desserts with Hannibal. Well, that's what he told himself the reason was, but who are we kidding? All Will wanted to do was avoid another awkward phone call between himself and Molly in front of Hannibal. He also, subconsciously, wanted to focus on his alone time with his best friend…maybe that was the real reason...

Beverly: How's Hannibal? Should I even ask...okay maybe that was mean :p

Beverly: Hey, how are you doing? I'm sorry about the joke before

Beverly: Okay really. Are you okay? Please tell me nothing happened...

Beverly: Hey! Are you alive?? I sent you like a ton of messages!! You better be sleeping by yourself!!!

Will squinted at the screen before sending back a flurry of replies, groaning at Beverly's concern that he was sleeping in the same bed with Hannibal. He wasn't going to do that…

I'm working on fixing our relationship, why would I share a bed with him?

Maybe Will "forgot" that he had thought about fucking Hannibal in the shower yesterday...

Will: Sorry, Bev. I've been running around with Hannibal all day prepping for this party

Will: I promise we'll catch up soon...want to come over early before the party to help set up?

Will paused before typing out another text. *Should I tell her about the reception? It's just a reception...it's not a date...definitely not a date...*

Will: I'm going with Hannibal to some sort of reception for the conference tomorrow night

Will sighed before turning over onto his back and laying his phone on top of his chest. He knew Beverly might give him shit about going to this thing.

She's going to give me shit about this reception...but it's not a fucking date!

Beverly: Oh! Glad to know you're alive, friend.

Beverly: Will it be just the two of you? Is Molly going??

Will sighed deeply again.

Will: It's just the two of us. Also Hannibal's seeing someone

Beverly: Um yeah I already know that...why would you feel the need to mention it?

Fuck. Will cursed to himself, realizing that mentioning that his best friend was seeing someone to prove that they wouldn't fool around sounded a lot more suspicious than vindicating.

Will: Sorry, I forgot I told you and I'm still half asleep :p

Beverly: Um yeah okay :p

Beverly: I really do hope you're sleeping in your own bed.

Will: Jesus, Beverly. Yes I'm sleeping in my own bed.

Beverly: :p So I'm assuming that I won't get to hang out with Hannibal until the party Sunday night right?

Will: Looks that way, and I think I might be busy all day tomorrow finishing up grading before the reception.

Will was lying, of course. He knew he wouldn't be able to stand the scrutiny of his friend Beverly who could get anyone to confess while under pressure. And Will could feel that pressure mounting. There was no way he couldn't see her before this reception. He might say something about thinking about fucking Hannibal the other day.

Wait, what? What am I thinking. Hannibal and I are just friends! Keep it together, Will.

Beverly: Okay, I understand. You're always dragging your feet :p

Beverly: Let me know what time I should come by for the party.

Beverly: Wait, are you going to the faculty meeting Sunday morning? You can't skip this one. ;)

Fuck. Will had forgotten that in addition to coercing him to host this party on Sunday, Kade had also scheduled a faculty meeting the same day to discuss next semester. Now he was forced to see Beverly...

Maybe she won't pressure me about Hannibal. She already knows I'm handling it…she's just teasing me right now…

Will: Ugh, I forgot. Yeah I'll be there.

I was thinking maybe I could give a short cooking tutorial before the party on Sunday…

Will: Oh Hannibal wants to know if you and Molly want to help set up for the party like cooking or prepping whatever is left

Beverly: OMG! Hannibal is so awesome. I always wanted to see him in action! Count me in!

Beverly: I'm glad he invited Molly. That was nice of him :) I guess things are working out between the two of you.

Will sighed as he closed his eyes. Were things "working out"? Molly and Hannibal still hadn't met, he was going to this reception as Hannibal's "date", he was ignoring phone calls from his girlfriend, and on top of that, he thought about having sex with Hannibal in the shower…plus all the other times they had been intimate...

Will shot up in his bed. *No! I can handle this!*

Will: Me too...can't wait for them to meet.

Will tossed his phone to the other side of the bed. He was lying when he wrote that message; he was dreading the day when Hannibal and Molly would finally meet.

Goddammit...

The following evening...

After spending the next day pretending to grade papers while actually thinking about being with...or uh…spending time with his best friend the rest of the weekend, Will dragged his body to his room to get ready for the reception.

Ugh, I better get ready for this thing...maybe I can tell Hannibal I'm not feeling well...to avoid going...

Will was anxious about not only having to play nice at a party with complete strangers, but also having to do so with the woman Hannibal was “seeing”.

I really don’t want to meet her.

Suddenly, Will’s phone rang. It was Hannibal. Will’s heart skipped a beat, hesitating before accepting the call.

“H-Hello?” Will asked, as if he didn’t know who it was.

“Will? Just letting you know that I’m finishing up before heading over to the reception.” Hannibal voice sounded soothing.

Well, he did ask nicely...maybe this won’t be so bad. Besides, he did ask me to go with him.

“Okay, I’m getting ready now—”

“There’s an outfit hanging up for you in the closet.” The interruption from Hannibal didn’t come off rude at all; Will hardly noticed it.

Will took his time opening the doors to his closet. He looked behind himself to glance around his room, thinking about Hannibal being there without him. He turned back to look at the outfit.

Will scrunched up his nose. “You picked out an outfit for me?” He ran a freehand down the length of the dress shirt Hannibal had hung up in his closet the night before.

“When did you have time to do this?” Will laughed a little. He was half shocked and half relieved that his friend had taken the time to pick out an outfit for him.

“Last night when you were taking a shower. I found something quickly. Hope you don’t mind.”

Hannibal’s voice filtered smoothly through the receiver. Will balanced his phone between his shoulder and his ear as he used both hands to look more thoroughly at the outfit his best friend had chosen for him.

“I can’t decide whether this is an invasion of my privacy,” Will chuckled a bit, “...or something I miss…” Will let his last statement breathlessly roll of his tongue, briefly longing for Hannibal agree.

A silent pause quickly followed on the other end of the receiver before Hannibal responded. For a split second, Will thought that he had ruined the moment by reminiscing.

“I hope it’s the latter.” Hannibal replied with a soft laugh.

Will smiled before grinning. He could imagine in his head Hannibal’s current expression. “So, I guess I’m wearing this.”

“Great. I’ll see you in a bit.”

“Okay, I’ll let you know when I’m there.” Will answered, his hand lingered as he took his time ending the call.

I hope it’s the latter.

Will smiled again before pulling the outfit off the hanger and walking toward the bathroom.

Less than an hour later...

Will decided to call a cab to ride over to the reception. He figured he would need a few cocktails to suppress his nerves and he didn’t feel like forcing Hannibal to drive them back to his apartment.

He waited patiently in his living room until his phone rang, indicating that his car was outside, ready to drive him to either a great night out or a disaster lingering in the wings. Will sighed before petting Winston’s head, who was sitting next to him on the couch.

“I wish I could take you with me.” Will whispered to Winston, leaning over to give his dog a deep scratch behind the ears.

Winston happily barked back, which prompted a smile from Will.

Ugh, I wish I could be as blissfully happy as you, buddy.

If only some way Will could reconcile his feelings for his best friend, he probably would be less stressed and more happy. He had noticed, however, even through a few of their tensed awkward moments, that he did feel a little bit happier with Hannibal around.

Will gave Winston one more loving scratch before heading out the door.

The drive to the reception felt like an eternity, Will was lost in his thoughts about seeing Hannibal with Bedelia.

Ugh, I don’t know if I can do this.

After taxi finally made it to the venue, Will paid the cab driver before hopping out of the car. He looked down at his phone, observing a message from Hannibal.

Hannibal: Let me know when you’re here. I’ll meet you outside.

Will: Just arrived. Outside I think.

Will shoved his phone back into the pocket of his slacks before rocking on his feet back and forth, waiting impatiently for Hannibal to greet him outside.

Shit, what if he's with Bedelia?

Will quickly, albeit irrationally, thought about calling the cab back to make a swift unexpected exit home, but decided against it when he remembered what Hannibal had told him last night.

You are my date, so I don't mind coming back to get you.

Will slapped his forehead without thinking. *Ugh, why does everything have to be so complicated between the two of us?*

"Will!" Will spun around when he heard his name, almost tipping over in the process. Hannibal was standing behind him, smiling. He was wearing a nicely fitted suit which equally nicely accentuated his figure.

The sight made Will flinch a little as he struggled to regain his composure.

Fuck.

"You're on time!" Hannibal commented as he sauntered up to his friend to greet him with a hug. Will hugged him back, but gently pushed himself away after a second or two for fear of getting too comfortable.

"I'm not always late, Hannibal." Will smirked. He straightened out his tie before glancing around for any sign of Bedelia.

She must be inside...or not here yet…wait maybe she's not coming? Will quickly reminded himself that he wasn't supposed to know what Bedelia looked like. Just that she was here and with his best friend.

Keep your cool, Will.

Hannibal extended his hand out for Will to take it. Will looked down at the hand before looking back up at his friend. Hannibal was smiling, seemingly unaware of Will's hesitation. The move reminded Will again of his trip to Chicago for the medical conference Hannibal was attending when they were roommates.

What if people think we're dating? Will had playfully asked Hannibal before entering the main building for the event together a few years ago; holding tightly onto his friend's hand.

I wouldn't mind that.

Hannibal turned around when he noticed that Will hadn't taken a hold of his hand. "Coming?" He asked, smiling down at his best friend.

Will looked back up at Hannibal before looking down at his hand again. He slowly grasped it which prompted Hannibal to tug him next to his body. He then playfully wrapped an arm around Will's shoulder and hugged him close to his body.

"I'm glad you're here." Will heard Hannibal whisper.

Will blushed at their closeness. “M-me too…” He responded, forgetting that he was dreading meeting Bedelia.

Will didn’t think before wrapping an arm around Hannibal’s waist. They walked into the venue together, grinning at the other, Will laughing at something Hannibal said.

Part Thirty - Four

Chapter Notes

> As mentioned before, this is especially dedicated to Evertonem whose favorite character makes his grand appearance once again.
>
> Please don't hate me too much! I love you guys, I promise this won't be too bad.

Unfortunately, the cute moment between the two (former?) best friends only lasted a minute or two longer until Will suddenly spotted a seemingly elegant looking blonde woman staring in their general direction as they walked into the venue. She was standing at the bar at the far end of the room, which so happened to be facing toward the entrance; the crowd of people around them parted to the opposite sides of the hall, creating a direct line of sight from Will and Hannibal to the woman.

Will immediately recognized the woman from the photos in Hannibal's travel bag.

Bedelia…fuck...

Will tried to force his face back into the jovial expression he had previously emoted upon entering the reception with Hannibal, however, his mien reflected pained surprise rather than complete contentment. He knew he needed to behave as if he didn't know what Bedelia looked like, otherwise Hannibal would catch on.

He'll know I went through his bag if I react to this woman.

Hannibal still held onto Will as they stepped closer toward Bedelia. For a quick second, Will looked around hurriedly for the restroom or a nearby exit in order to disappear without making a scene.

Maybe I can make a break for it before having to meet her...

Hannibal kept talking, chuckling about something Will had said when they were outside. Will's emotions bubbled close to the surface in reaction to how calm Hannibal seemed in the moment; the scene only revived old wounds and feelings. It reminded Will of the few times Hannibal seemed to parade around all the people he had slept with when he wasn't with him.

God, this could only get worse if Frederick shows up...and wouldn't that be awful…

Thoughts of running into people like Tobias out of the blue and reliving Hannibal's relationship with Donald clouded Will's mind and he felt like running away. The worst thought of all was meeting the person who had taken his place on the trip he had planned endlessly and had looked forward to with his best friend.

I can't believe he went on that trip with her and still hasn't talked to me about it...what the fuck Hannibal...

Hannibal had noticed Will's change in behavior almost immediately, however, he barely had the chance to address it before Bedelia started to make her way over toward them. She was carring a cocktail she had just ordered from the bar; her face puckered into a perpetual state of ennui.

"I should introduce you to Bedelia. She's walking over right now…" Will could feel Hannibal leaned inward toward his ear, pulling his body closer to his side with both hands on his shoulders.

I really don't want to meet your fucking girlfriend, Hannibal.

"Oh great." Will tried to sound interested and not jealous, but all the preparation he had done prior to this reception did not ready him enough for the actual meet up with Hannibal's new lover.

"I think you two might get along, actually." Hannibal added. He was looking forward and smiling at Bedelia; she barely smiled back.

Will's face twisted up into confusion. *What the fuck does that mean? And why is she walking so slowly?*

It felt like an eternity until Bedelia finally reached Will and Hannibal. Will tried to pry himself away from Hannibal, but his friend was still holding onto him, tight.

Oh my god...this is incredibly awkward...I wish he would let go of me.

Hannibal finally let go of Will to reach out for Bedelia. Will's heart sunk to the deepest reaches of his chest as he watched his best friend (and former lover? Yeah, I think that's okay to include) extend an arm out for Bedelia's waist and kiss her cheek before turning to face him again.

Will had to force his body to stay up upright; he couldn't take his eyes off the way Hannibal interacted with Bedelia. They seemed so familiar and comfortable with each other, as if they had been a couple for years.

They do look great together…ugh, I don't know how long I can stand this…

Will briefly imagined himself in Bedelia's position. It wasn't so long ago that he was Hannibal's date to every imaginable social function, basically taking for granted the way Hannibal had felt about him.

No one knows you the way I know you…

I knew I was in love with you since that night, however, I fear the feelings are...unrequited…

Will hadn't been able to reconcile his feelings for his best friend and now he was suffering because of it; watching Hannibal look happy with someone else.

No wonder he took her to Florence instead of me…

"Will, this is Bedelia." Hannibal had placed his hand on Will's shoulder while Will was lost in his thoughts. He knew he probably looked crazed, staring and analyzing why Hannibal was with someone like Bedelia and not him, but he didn't care. He didn't know how long he could stand being at this reception.

She's nothing like me…

"Nice to meet you, Will." Bedelia held her hand out for Will to shake. For a second, the hand was left unwelcomed, as if waiting for the world to collapse around their three-person circle of torture. He shook his head slightly and forced his hand out to take a hold of Bedelia's.

Keep it together! I can't make this moment more awkward than it already is.

"Likewise." Will basically muttered to himself. Hannibal was still smiling and Bedelia looked as if she were smirking at Will. Her facial expression was irking the shit out him and he wished she would quit staring at him.

Hannibal squeezed Will's shoulder. "Could I get you something to drink, Will?"

Will almost yanked his hand away from Bedelia's, but stopped himself short of doing so to avoid looking even more crazy.

"I can go with you—" He started, but Hannibal raised both hands to stop him.

"Don't worry about it. I'll get us drinks while you and Bedelia introduce yourselves." Hannibal turned around swiftly to head toward the bar before gently hugging both his best friend and girlfriend closer to each other.

Almost simultaneously, both Will and Bedelia backed away from one another as soon as Hannibal disappeared. For what seemed like forever, the two stood in complete silence; Will rocking slightly back and forth on his feet with his hands in his pockets giving Bedelia an awkward smile while Bedelia stood stoically in place, taking small sips from her cocktail.

It took Will a second, but he finally noticed that Bedelia was side eyeing him as she took sips out of her glass. He was already annoyed that Hannibal had left him with her, so the glance was driving him crazy. He wanted to yell "What?" back at her, but he had just met her and it probably wasn't a good idea to make a scene.

I can't believe he left me with her...

"He talks about you all the time." Bedelia murmured, before taking another sip out of her cocktail. She turned her body so that she was fully facing him, eyeing him with an intense stare that made Will feel uncomfortable.

"What?" Will thought he had misheard her.

Bedelia inched closer toward him, still peering at him as if she were studying him. Will leaned backward in response to her movement.

“Hannibal. Hannibal brings you up in conversation at every given opportunity.” She concluded with a slight smile before taking another sip from her cocktail.

Will definitely heard her that time. *Hannibal talks about me with her?*

“Well, um, I…” Will started, trying to back away from Bedelia’s uninvited closeness, “I hadn’t expected that since we haven’t been talking...”

“He told me about your...argument.” Bedelia added cautiously, revealing that she knew more than Will had thought about his past with Hannibal.

Exactly how much she knew was what was bothering Will now; he was angry that Hannibal had taken someone else to Florence and now this someone else possibly knew private details about him.

Will fidgeted. He tried averting his eyes to prevent Bedelia from watching him grow anxious. She was still eyeing him, waiting for him to respond to her last statement.

“I hope he didn’t bore you with the details, but you know how close friends can be sometimes…” Will tried to laugh off his anxiousness, but the joke seemed to land flat with Bedelia.

She did smirk, but it was more like the small curt smile she had given him when they shook hands.

“Of course.” She commented. She looked away from him as if the topic of conversation were already stale.

“He mentioned once that the two of you had discussed going to Florence together when you were younger.”

Will clenched his fists to keep his body from shaking. *What the fuck.*

Bedelia inched closer toward him again. She tilted her head up as if to get a better look at Will. “I couldn’t get him to talk about anything else. He took me to the places he wanted to take you…”

Will gulped. He felt his heart beating faster with every word that poured out of Bedelia’s mouth; the thought of them on that trip and talking about him was making him more upset than he had been upon initially seeing Bedelia.

Why is she telling me this?

Bedelia’s gaze was burning a hole through Will’s head. Will couldn’t take his eyes off her, but he wanted to escape; the conversation made his bubbling emotions finally cascade off the cliff.

Bedelia took a moment before starting up again. “It’s funny. I thought I would be able to handle myself better when I finally met you, but—”

“Will Graham?!”

Bedelia stopped speaking and looked behind Will, but it took Will a second to realize that his name was being called.

“William! That *is* you. I had a feeling I would see you here!” Will flinched when he recognized the grating familiar voice interrupting Bedelia. It was Frederick Chilton.

Will felt Frederick slap his back hard before stepping almost in between himself and Bedelia. Will was only a little relieved that Frederick had disturbed the intense moment, but most of him almost gagged from having to deal with Frederick again after a few Frederick-free years.

Ugh, I knew it. Where the fuck is Hannibal??

Frederick wouldn’t let go of Will; both he and Bedelia were too close to him like wolves circling a helpless sheep. Will glanced upward to look for Hannibal. Hannibal was still at the bar, waiting patiently for the bartender to hand him their drinks. He was chatting with another colleague, grinning as if the night were going smoothly.

Fuck.

Will felt Frederick squeeze his shoulder to get him to look in his direction. Frederick was leering connivingly and Bedelia had an eyebrow raised, a little annoyed that she had been interrupted, but nonetheless seemingly amused with the situation.

“It’s nice to know that you and Hannibal have remained the solid friends you appear to be.” Will felt Frederick clasped his shoulder even harder.

Will wanted to hit his former adversary in the face just to avoid Frederick implying something about him and Hannibal in front of Bedelia. It seemed as if that was Frederick’s only role their entire relationship; screwing up whatever peace the two friends had by bringing up their past sexual relationship in front of the people they were dating. He was glad Frederick would never meet Molly.

Doesn’t Frederick have something better to do?

“How are you by the way? Hannibal mentioned you were seeing someone. Well, I guess the both of you are seeing other people.”

Frederick wedged himself in between Bedelia and Will, looked at Bedelia before looking back at Will, hand still on his shoulder.

Will glanced at Bedelia. She seemed unfazed by Frederick’s assertion as if she knew about his past relationship with Hannibal.

Fuck. She does know.

“Is your girlfriend here too, Will? Or is just *guys’* night out?” Frederick smirked with extra emphasis on the word “guys’”.

Will figured he had two options: He could either make a scene and deck Frederick in the face, something he had wanted to do ever since Frederick told him about Hannibal and Abel, or he could run to the restroom and text Hannibal about leaving early before slipping out.

But before Will could do either, Hannibal finally appeared with their drinks. Will sighed to himself, even though he was majorly pissed off that Hannibal had put him in this situation.

“Aw, Frederick. Glad you decided to grace us with your presence.” Hannibal greeted his former roommate with a snide half smile as he handed Will a drink. Will took the drink without asking Hannibal what it was and took a huge sip before pausing.

Will changed his plans. He took another swig of his cocktail before grabbing Hannibal’s wrist. He tried to do it discreetly, but the move was noticeable.

“Hannibal. Can I speak to you for a second?” Will whispered to his friend.

Both Frederick and Bedelia were staring at the two, Frederick growing ever more amused by the sight. Will wished he had something pithy to say to Frederick, but the combination of meeting Bedelia, fuming over Florence, being at a party with Hannibal, dealing with his feelings for Hannibal, and feeling anxious about the crowd size at the reception prevented Will from combating Frederick.

He needed to get out of there as quickly as possible and figure out why Hannibal had put him in this position. Was he trying to prove something? Well, whatever Hannibal was doing, it was making Will extremely uncomfortable and he needed to exit before things got worse.

“Sure.” Hannibal answered, letting Will guide him away from the group.

“Excuse us for a second.” Will said before dragging his best friend to the side hallway into a cramped room that looked more like a utility closet.

Will barely let the door close behind them before letting Hannibal have it.

“Why did you bring me to this thing? I’m so out of place, I feel incredibly uncomfortable, and on top of that, I had to deal with Frederick. You know I don’t like that guy!”

Will was seething. He backed away from Hannibal, who was almost pressed up against the wall of the tiny room.

Hannibal let Will pace from wall to opposite wall as best as he could despite how small the room was. He placed his cocktail on an empty table next to him before crossing his arms.

“I ‘brought’ you because I care about having you around, despite whatever you believe.” Hannibal rolled his eyes slightly, which caught Will off guard. He had only seen his friend flustered a few times. Most times due to something Will had done to Hannibal. His demeanor was completely different from the way he was acting around Frederick and Bedelia.

Hannibal paused and Will huffed. “Whatever, Hannibal.”

Hannibal continued to stay silent, as if he were waiting for his friend to cool down. Will stopped walking back and forth in front of Hannibal and sighed.

What the fuck am I doing here?

“I don’t believe you.” Will said sternly, shooting daggers at his friend with his eyes.

Hannibal uncrossed his arms before walking over toward Will. Will wanted to back away, but the size of the room prevented him from doing so and the way Hannibal was looking at him arrested him in his tracks.

Hannibal held out a hand and touched Will’s cheek. Will’s eyes were wide with disbelief.

Is he going to kiss me? Will thought quickly, although irrationally, completely forgetting that they were seeing other people.

Hannibal caressed Will’s face with his thumb. Will leaned into the hand, placing his own hand on top of Hannibal’s. They stared at one another until Hannibal broke the silence.

“I apologize for how uncomfortable you feel. That wasn’t my intention…if you prefer, we can go home.”

Will kept his hand on Hannibal’s, fighting the urge to grab Hannibal by the waist. “A-are you sure?”

Hannibal leaned forward a little. Will really thought he was going to kiss him this time. “Yes. Didn’t I say you were my date? It’s my responsibility to make sure you have a great night and arrive home safely. And it appears that I’m failing.”

Will smiled. This moment was one of the ones he had missed when they weren’t speaking to one another, a touching loving moment when they were both kind and sweet to one another. It happened more often than not, but Will had missed it greatly, nonetheless.

“What if we stayed a little longer…we just got here. Then we can go home early?” Will offered. He was now mimicking Hannibal’s gesture by placing a hand on his friend’s cheek and caressing it.

Hannibal smiled. “Are you sure?”

Will laughed before playfully pushing his friend away. “Of course. I’m sorry for getting upset...I think I’m...nervous…” He added cautiously referring to meeting Bedelia for the first time.

Hannibal wrapped an arm around his friend’s waist and pulled him close. “Don’t be. I already said *you’re* my date.”

Will smiled at Hannibal before letting his friend guide him out of the room.

Maybe he does still have feelings for me?

Will was glad that Hannibal had his back, but what did that mean for the two of them? The moment in the room had been intensely sexually charged, yet neither one of them seemed to recoil. Will figured it was a resurgence of their past friendship and decided that he should take advantage of the opportunity and have fun tonight with his best friend.

Either way, I miss being with him like this.

Part Thirty - Five

Chapter Notes

> After moving/unpacking basically the whole month of July, catching up with work, entertaining my friend from back home, and designing an entire room in my apartment for just my cat, I'm finally back and I think I'll be back on a regular schedule (I know I keep saying that, but I got my mojo back --- also I thought it would be better for me to update when I feel the most inspired instead of giving you guys a crappy chapter).
>
> I hope you all enjoy this and thank you so much for reading!! Leave me a comment to tell me what you think so far, I love hearing from all of you!
>
> Happy shipping,
> Lady_slice

Hannibal led Will out into the main reception room; by the time they had re-entered the space, both Frederick and Bedelia had joined other conversations. As Hannibal led him over to the bar counter, Will glanced around, noticing that Frederick was now loudly talking and laughing with a group of colleagues near the opposite side of the room, barely paying attention to them. He looked like he was more concerned with a charming good-looking surgeon than wreaking havoc on Will and Hannibal.

Hopefully I don't have to deal with him the rest of the night.

Hannibal handed Will another drink. Will stared at the offer before rolling his eyes. "I feel like I shouldn't, I already made a scene." He half chuckled; half sighed before trying the drink.

Don't be. I already said you're my date.

"You're fine. No one hardly noticed." Hannibal grinned.

Will smiled to himself, still reeling from the moment with Hannibal back in that tiny room.

Just relax...how often have you thought about spending time with Hannibal this past year?

Will jerked a little when he thought about how much he had missed Hannibal. Hannibal was laughing while chatting with the bartender, taking some cash out of his wallet to tip him after accepting his cocktail. Will smiled again, this time like a huge goof, almost like the way he used to before he and Hannibal started having sex, beaming from ear to ear whenever he saw his best friend, especially when he hadn't seen Hannibal after he moved to New York for medical school.

Those similar feelings, coupled with the way he was feeling now, clouded Will's judgement, fueling his desire to basically check Hannibal out while he was talking to the bartender.

So, this definitely wasn't a resurgence of their past friendship. This was something else entirely.

"What are you looking at?" Hannibal inquired with a coy expression, already fully aware that Will had been staring at him since handing him his drink.

Will smirked, blushed, then looked away. He finally realized that he was gawking at Hannibal.

"Nothing." Will quipped. Hannibal chuckled before scooting closer toward Will. Will stood in place, completely caught up in how great Hannibal looked and smelled. He had to fight the urge to lean over and try to hug him...or something...you know...just to touch him...a little…

"So do you know *everyone* here?" Will asked, the question almost lost through a sip from his cocktail yet forcing himself to keep his cool.

Hannibal nodded. "I am familiar with just about everyone here." He turned a little so that Will could see three quarters of his face.

"Don't worry, though, I won't make you play nice with *everyone*." Hannibal concluded, smirking at his friend.

Will nudged Hannibal with the end of his elbow, trying to not think about how sexy Hannibal looked just now.

"I'm *not* that bad."

"You've always been 'that bad'. But it's still cute." Hannibal said before walking forward to scope out who was worthy enough of meeting his best friend.

Will blushed again. *But it's still cute*. The observation reminded Will of the few times Hannibal had mentioned how adorable his quirks were in the past.

Come to think of it, he's done that ever since I've known him…

"Hurry along, I'll introduce you to just a few people!" Hannibal almost shouted back at Will, who was still propped up against the bar counter.

Will shook his head; he had been daydreaming about his relationship with his best friend, thinking about all the good times. Also, completely forgetting that he was seeing someone else…

About an hour later…

Hannibal and Will managed to avoid running into any further awkward situations with Bedelia and Frederick. Bedelia appeared to have taken the hint and spoke mostly with other people at the reception leaving Will and Hannibal alone before they left for home. Will thought it was a little strange that Bedelia was behaving the way that she was; he knew her relationship with Hannibal was on and off again, but they barely interacted with each other at the reception. He knew it was because of him, she more or less said so.

He talks about you all the time.

Will did notice after a while, however, that Bedelia had been staring at him from across the room. Hannibal didn't react whenever Will averted his gaze, which made Will feel even more weird about the atmosphere. He thought maybe he would mention something to Hannibal about it later that night…like not in an accusing "your-girlfriend-wouldn't-stop-looking-at-me" kind of a way, but "oh-are-you-possibly-having-problems-with-your-girlfriend-oh-and-let-me-comfort-you" sort of a way. But like friends…not former lovers/best friends...just friends...

Will also noticed, or well felt rather, Hannibal touching the small of his back. It was barely a touch, but Will could feel it. The stare down between him and Bedelia intensified while Hannibal was touching him; Will had to pull away from his friend to stay levelheaded.

Maybe we should go home. I'm starting to feel uncomfortable again.

After debating with the head surgeon of one of the nearby hospitals about the newest medical journal findings, Will managed to pry Hannibal away from his colleagues.

"Can we go home now? I'm a little tired." Will asked Hannibal, tugging on his friend in the direction of the nearest exit.

Hannibal smirked, letting Will drag him slightly. "Sure. I didn't think you would hold on this long."

Will chuckled. "I have more will than you think, Hannibal."

Will led them away from a group of people after exchanging goodbyes. He looked back over to where Bedelia had ended up. She was chatting with another woman, not looking in their general direction.

"Don't you want to say goodbye to Bedelia?" Will asked, stopping abruptly.

Hannibal gracefully managed not to run into his friend's body. He glanced briefly at Bedelia before looking back at Will.

"I'll call her later."

Will half smiled, but he continued to feel strange, as if he were competing for Hannibal with Bedelia.

Stop! I'm just catching up with my best friend tonight. Chill, Will.

"Okay…" Was all Will could contribute, afraid of opening a can of worms.

Out on the corner outside of the reception, they barely spoke another word as they flagged down a cab. The silence grew less awkward as Will basically flirted with Hannibal in the cab, sitting too close to his friend, while laughing loudly at everything he said.

About an hour and a half later...

"Wait, I forgot to give you something." Hannibal put his glass of wine down lightly on the kitchen counter.

The two friends had been standing in Will's kitchen, drinking wine and reminiscing. Truthfully, Will had felt tired back at the reception, but he had also secretly used it as an excuse to spend more time with Hannibal the rest of the night. Fortunately, all of their past memories gave him another extra boost; the hours ticking away without another thought.

Hannibal disappeared into the guest room. Will waited by the kitchen counter, grinning hard, thinking about how cute Hannibal had been during the reception, and maybe pouring the two of them another glass of wine. Hannibal walked into the kitchen after a minute or two, holding a DVD box set.

"What's that?" Will asked slyly, crossing his arms up against his chest.

Hannibal sauntered over toward the living room area with Will's eyes glued to his body's every movement.

"I managed to track down all three seasons of *The Hunt*."

Will almost dropped his wine glass. He had been looking for that show ever since a year ago.

Will had been so depressed about his fight with Hannibal, that he had tried to find not only *The Hunt*, but did everything that reminded him of Hannibal, remember the sandwich?...and maybe wearing one or two of Hannibal's shirts that had been left behind…(whoops).

"I *can't* believe you found a copy…" Will began. He almost spilled his wine on the carpet as he briskly walked over to Hannibal to gawk at the box set.

Hannibal handed the set to him as he took Will's wine glass. "I figured you would appreciate it."

Will lingered, longing for Hannibal to lightly brush his hand as his friend took his glass. Hannibal did touch his hand more than he needed to, but it was barely noticeable, I guess if you weren't the two of them, you wouldn't have noticed…maybe…

Will smiled before walking over to his entertainment center to play the first episode. Hannibal had a light step but growing up and living with him trained Will to hear even the lightest of his best friend's steps. He heard Hannibal sit down quietly on the couch, waiting for him to join.

Will took his time pressing play; he knew Hannibal was watching him. "I've been looking all over for this show...I can't believe you found it."

"Hopefully, it's as entertaining as we remember." Hannibal's voice sounded so soothing.

This might get interesting. Will thought to himself, still thinking about how sexy Hannibal looked and acted that night….and forgetting about Molly.

Will turned around and made his way over toward the couch. Hannibal was sitting in the middle of the couch, arms elegantly placed on top of the seat cushions, legs naturally spread apart. Enough for someone shorter than him to sit in between.

Without notice, Will walked over to Hannibal and plopped down hard in between his best friend's legs. Hannibal, a little alarmed by the move, shifted a bit on the couch, but didn't try to move Will.

Hannibal cleared his throat. "Will, there's enough room on your couch for the both of us."

Will turned slightly to smirk at Hannibal. He put his hands on his friend's thighs. "Sure, but I'm comfortable here..."

Hannibal didn't respond. He knew what Will wanted; his friend's confidence had been building the whole night.

Will snuggled up closer to Hannibal's crotch as he felt Hannibal pushed back slightly into his backside. The first episode began playing on the screen, but all Will could think about was the way Hannibal's body felt up against his.

He accidentally let a quaint moan slip; the grip on his friend's thigh tightened as Hannibal ran a hand down Will's back.

Will bit his lip and closed his eyes; his grasp on Hannibal's thigh loosened, rubbing up against the fabric of his friend's trousers as he continued to grind his ass into Hannibal's lap. Another moan escaped his lips as he felt Hannibal's breath on the back of his neck, moaning quieter than he was, but Will could feel that he too was caught up in the moment.

Hannibal let the hand tracing Will's back slip down toward his waist. He squeezed Will's body, guiding his movement on top of his hardening cock. Will could feel Hannibal get harder and harder with every grind, feeling his own erection rub up against the inside of his pants. He wanted to touch himself in front of Hannibal but controlled his desire. He also wanted the moment to last.

"Hannibal…" Will gasped as he felt Hannibal pull him closer toward his body and push upward into his.

They sat on the couch, Will facing away from Hannibal, moaning at each gasp. Hannibal slid his hand up and down Will's body, feeling everywhere he could as if this was the first time he had ever touched his best friend.

The grinding became more vigorous as Will leaned forward to force his ass harder into Hannibal's lap, slowing down his movement, thinking about Hannibal being inside of him, fucking him hard on the couch. Hannibal used his free hand to push Will forward even more; Will was bent over, still sliding his hands up and down Hannibal's thighs, bunching up the fabric of his friend's trousers with his fists.

Through a moment of passionate groaning from the two, Will heard Hannibal's zipper unzip. He felt his body being pulled back and he shoved himself backward even harder than before, whimpering in anticipation for the moment he thought he had gotten over.

Hannibal slipped a hand up his shirt and pinched one his nipples, using the move to bring Will back up into a seated position on top of his lap. Will continued to moan and grope Hannibal's thighs, pleading with small cries for his friend to fuck him, until he felt the unmistakable sensation of an incoming call from his phone reverberated through his body.

Will yelped as he jumped off Hannibal, almost toppling over onto the floor, but catching himself as he yanked his phone out of his back pocket.

He was supposed to call Molly when he got home but forgot.

FUCK!!!!!!!!!

"H-Hello!" Will nearly shouted as he ran into the hallway, leaving Hannibal with his trousers unzipped on the couch.

"Yep…hmmmm….yep…around four….uh-un...yep…okay! I'm really tired…yeah, I have to get up early…it was great!!! Yeah, going to bed now…goodnight…"

Will glanced around the hallway arch to look back at Hannibal, who had gotten up from the couch to straighten his clothes out.

Will winced. "...night, Molly…." he barely hung up the phone before sighing loudly, letting his arms slam up against the wall.

"Will?" Will thought for a split second about running into bathroom and locking the door, but before he could run away, Hannibal was standing in front of him, a bit flustered looking from the moment on the couch.

God, I did drink too much, fuck.

Will looked down. He couldn't face Hannibal. They had almost fucked on the couch.

I can't believe I got caught up in my feelings for you again.

"I should...probably stay with Molly…that was just her saying goodnight, but...I should go over there…." Will thought about closing his eyes as if opening them again would make this

all go away. He had broken the promise to himself and nearly messed around with Hannibal.

Fuck…

Hannibal only inched closer toward Will, but Will didn't back away. He knew he needed to, however the feeling of wanting to be close to his best friend again was making him think irrationally.

Will had to fight the urge to touch Hannibal's body. Hannibal was hovering over him, one hand pressed up against the wall of the hallway, positioning his body to face his friend's.

"Whatever you're comfortable with…" Hannibal murmured. Will couldn't tell if he was upset or fine with his decision.

I can't tell what he's thinking...it's freaking me out.

Suddenly Hannibal pushed himself away from the wall. He sighed before putting his hands on his waist.

"You know you're driving me crazy." He admitted before looking back directly back at Will.

Will's eyes widened. He wasn't sure what Hannibal had meant by that. *Is he being serious?*

Will eyed his best friend. *He can't be serious…ugh...I mean we did almost fuck...*

Hannibal huffed again before crossing his arms. "Oh well." He pivoted quickly to walk toward the guest room.

"I'll see you tomorrow then. Hope you have a good night."

What????

Will grabbed Hannibal by the arm before he could get away further. "Wait, Hannibal. Wait."

Hannibal let Will tug him gently toward his body. Will knew he shouldn't indulge in whatever Hannibal had meant, but the few cocktails he had had at the reception plus the wine told him he should do otherwise. He could faintly hear *The Hunt* playing in the background.

"Why are you doing this? You know how I feel...about all of this…" Will cautiously tried to explain the way he was feeling; not being completely honest was weighing on him and he felt trapped.

"No, I *don't* know how you feel, Will." Hannibal answered, slightly one octave louder than the murmur from before.

Will held onto his best friend tighter, he knew he looked crazy. Hannibal acting so nonchalantly about them almost fucking blew his mind. He had to focus. He couldn't let all of the hard work he had put into repairing his relationship with his best friend and not fucking up his current romantic relationship go to waste.

However, he knew what Hannibal had meant. Their whole relationship had been this constant back and forth wrapped in half-truths and secret feelings for the other. This night was the physical embodiment of not being honest with each other.

Will let go of Hannibal. “I-I…”

Hannibal gently caressed Will’s shoulder with one hand before sliding it up along Will’s neck to his face. Will let Hannibal cup his cheek, feeling his friend’s warmth filter through his skin.

“I miss…my best friend…” Will whispered. He felt Hannibal caress his cheek before pulling away. Will closed his eyes as he felt the rapid coolness of where Hannibal’s hand used to be.

“I do as well…” Hannibal replied. He backed away before putting his hands on his hips again. “We should probably call it a night.”

Will nodded before brushing past Hannibal in the direction of his room. He couldn’t stand the emotions he was experiencing, and he thought he was going to explode with grief over whatever he had missed with his best friend.

Hannibal let him go, waiting in the hallway before the door to Will’s bedroom closed with a soft click. He lingered before entering the guest room.

Part Thirty - Six

Chapter Notes

You guys...I hit 100,000 words !!

Thank you for the all the comments and love from the last update! So glad you guys are still enjoying this :)

--lady_slice

P.S. belated shout out to the person who left the 400th kudo on this work! That brightened my day :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As soon as the door closed behind him, Will fell over on top of his bed—actually he almost missed the bed as he collapsed; his body went limp, and it became difficult to control. He was still clenching onto his phone, incredibly exhausted from the moment with Hannibal out in the hallway (...and on the couch).

Ugh…I can't believe I just did that…

Will groaned as he slowly turned over onto his back; he stared up at the ceiling, studying the patterns the stucco made along the surface, manipulating the patterns into familiar shapes. One circle, a square next to it...something that look a lot like Hannibal's cock…

OMG! What the fuck is wrong with me????!

Will flipped back around onto his stomach and smothered his face with his pillow, stifling an oncoming scream.

You know you're driving me crazy.

The weight of Will's heart grew heavier, creating a familiar sickening feeling as it sunk lower into the nether regions of his chest. He rolled over onto his side and scrunched up in pain, letting out a heavy groan.

I think I'm driving myself crazy.

Will held onto his sides, trying to ameliorate the pain, but it was no use. He could still feel Hannibal's breath on his neck and the hardness of his cock through the fabric of his clothes. Will clenched his fists again, still holding tightly onto his phone, thinking about the way Hannibal was holding onto him as they dry humped on the couch.

I should have gone over to Molly's...why the fuck am I still in my apartment??

Will slowly turned back onto his backside, glanced at his phone before turning his head slightly, peering over at the wall that was shared with the guest room.

I need to be straightforward with him...we can't do this anymore...I'm done...I just want to be friends again...

Will shot up in the bed, determined to set the record straight with Hannibal before going back to sleep.

Nothing bad could happen, right?

However, Will's mind quickly reminded him that it *definitely* wasn't a good idea to confront Hannibal now by replaying the sound he had made when Hannibal pinched his nipple and sensation he had felt when Hannibal unzipped his pants…

FUCK! Fuck…

Will fell back onto his bed, heaving heavily from thinking, again, about how hard Hannibal had gotten from him just grinding on his lap.

I'm so fucked...Beverly was so right…

Will lifted his phone above his head. He hesitated before typing out a message to Beverly. He would get so much shit for this tomorrow, but he felt trapped again and had nowhere else to turn.

Maybe talking to Beverly about everything would make him feel better…like confessing everything, everything…almost fucking tonight…the "friends with benefits" thing...everything...

Will slowly inhaled.

Will: I'm afraid I made a huge mistake…

The next morning...

"And finally, and probably, the best news so far…" Jack paused briefly for everyone in the room to let out a collective sigh.

Will and the rest of his colleagues were sitting in a small conference room in the psychology department at Johns Hopkins, suffering through their regularly scheduled faculty meeting. Will had thought about skipping; not only did he have to endure this meeting, but the faculty

party was tonight, and he hadn't given it any thought since going to the reception. Luckily, Hannibal had stepped in and prepped most of the dishes.

Fuck…Hannibal.

"Well, this should be good." Jimmy smirked as he crossed his arms, leaning backward into his chair.

He was sitting next to Brian, who was chuckling. Beverly was standing, holding a coffee cup and Miriam was sitting close to where Jack was standing. Will had arrived to the meeting late, so he sat a little far away from the group in a desk chair up against the wall.

"You didn't even hear the news yet, Jimmy." Jack crackled back, a little annoyed. Actually, he was really annoyed. He didn't want to be there on a Sunday, neither.

Everyone, again in unison, rolled their eyes, ready to leave to get ready for Will's party. Will couldn't fully contribute to his colleagues' bout with boredom, however; he was still thinking about grinding on Hannibal's cock last night.

He looked over at Beverly; she appeared completely concentrated on whatever Jack was saying at the moment. However, after a second, she finally noticed that Will was staring at her, prompting her to glance quickly at her friend.

Fuck, I can't tell her everything. Why did I send that message last night?

Will quickly averted his eyes, looking down at his hands which were clenched on top of his knees. Beverly squinted her eyes, giving her friend a piercing stare. She was definitely planning to confront Will after the meeting about this message he had sent her last night.

I shouldn't have looked at her…

"All right everyone, that's it. See you all later at Will's." Jack concluded, sighing before turning his phone back on to call his wife, Bella.

Jimmy whooped as Brian gave him a disapproving scowl. Miriam only rolled her eyes as she caught Jack as soon as he finished his phone conversation to speak with him about next semester. Everyone began filtering out of the room; Will tried to sweep himself up with the exiting crowd, however, Beverly managed to step right in front of him before he could swiftly leave the room.

"Okay, Will. What the *fuck* is going on?" She pulled her friend to the side, out of earshot of the group.

Ugh, fuck.

"I haven't heard from you since the night before last and then I get a message about you being 'afraid' you made some terrible mistake? You didn't fuck, did you?" Beverly was in Will's face, but she whispered with concern.

“I’m fine. And we didn’t *fuck*, Beverly. I do have self-control.” Will had to prevent himself from wincing in front of her, his mind wouldn't let him forget the way he had moaned Hannibal’s name while Hannibal squeezed his body up against his cock.

Omg…

“What’s wrong? Your face just twisted up all of a sudden…” Beverly wedged herself more into Will’s personal space as soon as she realized that something *did* happen between him and Hannibal last night.

“Something *did* happen last night, didn’t it?!” Beverly quieted down as soon as she realized her voice was slightly raised, “...*why* else would you send me that text?”

“Well...er…hm….you see..” Before Will could babble on any further, he felt his phone vibrate; a text from Hannibal illuminated his screen. He winced before shoving the phone back into his pocket.

Hannibal had been texting Will all morning, however, Will had been ignoring every single one. He was still too embarrassed by his actions the night before that he couldn’t even bring himself to look at Hannibal’s texts.

I should answer him...

Will sighed. He pulled out his phone again, finally looking through Hannibal’s messages as he tried to get away from Beverly.

Hannibal: Good morning, I hope you slept well. I left early for the conference and didn’t want to wake you. I hope you have a productive meeting.

Hannibal: I may be able to leave this thing earlier than expected. I assume you’ll let me know when you get home

Hannibal: Also, I’m looking forward to our cooking lesson this afternoon before the party. I can’t wait to meet Molly.

Will stared at the last message. *What the fuck? Why does he keep saying that?*

“Well? Is that him?? You guys fucked; I *knew* it.” Beverly was nearly shouting at this point but thankfully everyone had left the room.

Will sidestepped around Beverly, but he couldn’t shake her. She was supposed to come over to his apartment for this cooking tutorial thing.

Fuck, I forgot Beverly was invited to this thing, too. I love her, but I can’t with the accusations right now.

Will turned around so he could look Beverly directly in the eye. She was crossing her arms, her expression incredulous.

“If you stop shouting and follow me home before the ‘Cooking with Hannibal’ thing, then I’ll talk to you about what happened, okay?” Will used air quotes to quip on Hannibal having them “help” him prep for the party.

Beverly, realizing that she was giving her already stressed-out friend more trouble than he needed even though he was creating all the drama mostly by himself, backed off. She uncrossed her arms but placed her hands on her hips to indicate that she wasn’t going to take any bullshit from Will.

“I won’t bullshit you, Beverly.” Will smirked, hand outstretched as if to stop the force of nature that was his friend Beverly Katz.

Meanwhile…

Hannibal: Also, I’m looking forward to our cooking lesson tonight. I can’t wait to meet Molly.

Hannibal stared at his phone, waiting for Will to answer his most recent text. He knew his friend was avoiding him; he had sent a few messages throughout the day but hadn’t received one reply.

He’s avoiding me.

Hannibal was standing near the hors d'oeuvres table in a side room off the main room for the medical conference, briefly looking at his phone. He then glanced at his watch before inching closer toward the table. He was planning to leave right after this next panel, hopefully arriving back to Will’s apartment before anyone else arrived so he could speak to his friend in private about last night.

He’s incredibly frustrating...as always.

Hannibal’s thoughts about Will were interrupted by a sauntering Bedelia, who had stopped at the table once she spotted Hannibal standing by himself. They hadn’t spoken to each other since the reception.

Bedelia looked at Hannibal before leaning over the table. “Your friend, Will, seems...nice...a little high strung...but harmless, nonetheless.” Bedelia painfully murmured as she chose her favorite cheeses from the charcuterie and cheese board.

Hannibal only glanced slightly sideways as he let her fill her tiny plate before he took a share.

“He tends to get anxious around large groups, but I will tell him that you enjoyed his company.” Hannibal commented, aware of Bedelia’s awkwardness upon approaching the subject.

The two of them stood in complete silence, cognitive of the huge elephant in the room.

“You still have feelings for him, don’t you?” Bedelia finally asked, bitingly cutting to the chase. Ever since Hannibal had brought up Will when they first started seeing each other, Bedelia could tell, from the way her boyfriend talked about him, that he still had lingering unaddressed feelings for his best friend.

Hannibal rolled his eyes. He hated how pointed Bedelia could be sometimes, but she was right.

“To burn with desire and keep quiet about it is the greatest punishment we can bring on ourselves.” Hannibal practically muttered to himself. Unfortunately, Bedelia heard him.

Bedelia raised an eyebrow and huffed loudly. “God, quit being *so* dramatic, Hannibal...it turns out the two of you are perfect for one another.” She almost spat, referring to Will’s behavior the previous night.

“Also, thank you for returning *our* photos. And if that’s not an indication of your true feelings, I don’t know what else will do.” She curtly added, elegantly whisking herself away, leaving Hannibal to brood by himself, only accompanied by half eaten hors d'oeuvres.

Hannibal looked at his phone again before entering the main room for the next panel.

Earlier that morning, Hannibal had left the manila envelope with the photos from Florence outside of Bedelia’s hotel room before attending the conference.

Back at Will’s apartment...

“Will, oh my god, Will!” Beverly practically chased her friend into his apartment. Will made a beeline for the kitchen, immediately pouring himself a drink.

“So, you’re drinking in the middle of the day now?” Beverly managed to say playfully, even though she was extremely concerned with her friend’s behavior.

Will took a huge gulp from his wine glass, paused before swallowing, taking his time, knowing full well that Beverly was going to give him a huge amount of shit.

“Will?” She had her hands on her hips now, tapping her foot for an answer.

“Bev, I promise you. We didn’t have sex last night. Okay?” Will couldn’t tell her the whole truth, not before both Molly and Hannibal would be in his apartment in about an hour or so.

Beverly tapped her foot in hurried anticipation. “Well, then *what* happened? You wouldn’t be acting this way if something *didn’*t happen. I know you. Hell, I don’t even need to know you to see that you’re acting bizarre.”

Will took another huge sip out of his wine glass. He took a second glass out of the cabinet and poured himself another drink and one for Beverly.

“Oh my god, Will. Stop being *so* dramatic.” Beverly rolled her eyes as Will handed her the glass. He looked as if he were due to face a firing squad.

Will backed away up against the counter, scratching his forehead with his free hand, trying to find the right words to say.

“Last night…Beverly please *stop* looking at me like that...last night, and we didn’t do anything besides this, I swear—Oh my god, Beverly, stop looking at me like that!” Will had gotten to the point where he was too embarrassed to continue but had provided too many details to stop the story.

“I’m just going to assume that you and Hannibal fucked last night if you don’t tell me otherwise.” Beverly chided.

Will took in a huge breath of air. “Okay, fine. We dry humped for a bit on my couch, that’s it.” He finally admitted, racing through the words as quickly as possible. He felt strangely relieved that he had told Beverly the truth, but then his side throbbed with pain as Beverly’s eyes widened.

“You did *what*? How *fucking* old are you, Will? I don’t *believe* you didn’t have sex. There’s no way.” Beverly almost dropped her wine glass as she expressed her concern wildly with her hands.

“We didn’t...that was it…” Will started, “...I got a phone call from Molly that interrupted us before it could go...any further…”

“WHAT. THE. ABSOLUTE. FUCK??” Beverly was beside herself. She couldn’t believe her friend was making this whole weekend into a complete nightmare.

“Molly is going to be here with Hannibal tonight. This is the first time they’re going to meet and you almost had sex with your best friend last night? What the *hell* is wrong with you?”

Will rolled his eyes. He gently put his drink down on the counter before taking a step toward Beverly. He could feel her anger radiating off her body.

“Beverly. *Nothing* happened, I probably would have stopped it any. And nothing *will* happened. I realized my mistake and this is it. I promise.” He placed his hands on Beverly’s shoulders.

“Does Hannibal know that?” She refused to acknowledge his change in tone.

Will let go of Beverly before walking back over to the counter. “I’ll talk to him before Molly gets here—”

Will’s sentence was interrupted with the sound of the doorknob turning at the front door. It was Hannibal, using the spare key Will had given him.

“Is that Hannibal or Moll—” Beverly began, but Will cut her off by running swiftly to the door. He knew it was Hannibal.

Will threw the door open and was confronted with a slightly exhausted looking Hannibal. Hannibal had been thinking about what to say to Will as soon as he saw him but hadn’t seen Beverly standing in the kitchen. Usually, he was more aware of his surroundings.

“Will, I—” But before Hannibal could even begin his statement, Will interrupted him.

“Oh great! You *and* Beverly are here early to help me! I have the *best* set of friends.” Will practically dragged Hannibal toward the kitchen, purposely cutting his best friend off while putting extra emphasis on Beverly’s presence so that talk about almost fucking was kept to a crisp zero.

“Hi, Hannibal!” Beverly exclaimed, a little nervous because of everything she knew about his past relationship with Will...oh and that Molly was going to be there any minute.

“Nice to see you again, Beverly.” Hannibal acknowledged by shaking her hand.

“Thank you for doing this…I…er…I’m looking forward to the lesson!” Beverly still felt extremely awkward and annoyed that Will hadn’t planned well in advance.

Will made it even more uncomfortable by sidestepping in between his two best friends.

“Hannibal, could I speak to you for a moment? Sorry, Bev. We’ll just be a second.” Will pulled Hannibal into the hallway, leaving Beverly by herself, completely confused by what had just happened.

Will shoved Hannibal up against the wall and held onto his shirt. “Hannibal, listen. I wish I could talk to you about this in private, but it doesn’t look like I’m going to get a chance before Molly gets here.” He was staring directly into Hannibal’s eyes, holding onto him tightly.

Hannibal was staring back but didn’t interrupt Will. His expression almost derailed Will’s momentum, but he persevered.

I’m not going to get distracted this time.

“Last night...last night didn’t mean anything, okay? Can we start over? I just want to enjoy the party with my best friend.”

Will let go of Hannibal as soon as he realized that he was holding onto him too tightly. Hannibal kept silent even after Will let him go. He straightened out his clothes before sighing, ending with a curt smile.

“Agreed. There’s definitely been a sense of...uneasiness around us ever since I arrived. I do truly miss being comfortable around you, Will.”

Will suddenly felt calm. He placed a hand on Hannibal’s arm and caressed it. “I’m sorry… let’s have fun tonight, okay?”

“Hey...guys...is everything okay?” Beverly hesitated rounding the corner, but she figured it was better for her to catch them in the act than Molly.

Will quickly backed away from Hannibal as soon as Beverly was in the hallway. All three of them stared at one another until Hannibal broke the silence.

“Wine anyone?” He asked, pure contentment etched onto his face.

Chapter End Notes

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Part Thirty - Seven

Beverly glanced at Will before answering. She could tell something was going on before she had entered the hallway but decided against making a scene. Not yet anyway.

“This one is *way* ahead of you.” She replied, pointing at Will.

Will nervously chuckled, looking back at Hannibal.

Ugh, why did she say that??

“Beverly…” Will blushed, Hannibal grinned, and Beverly laughed out loud, although she still felt extremely uncomfortable with the palpable sexual tension emanating between her friend and Hannibal.

Unfortunately, nothing more could be done about it as the suspense ramped up with the sound of the doorbell ringing.

“Is that Molly? She *doesn’t* have a key to your place?” Beverly inquired with her face scrunched up into a very confused expression.

“...I...um...gave my spare key to Hannibal this weekend…I’m pretty sure I mentioned that...” Will sheepishly answered.

Jesus, Beverly. Stop asking so many questions.

“Oh right...the ‘Airbnb’ thing…” Beverly had to prevent herself from rolling her eyes. Hannibal, thankfully, didn’t acknowledge the awkward moment.

The doorbell rang again. This time it woke up Winston, who was peacefully sleeping in the corner of the kitchen. He barked, loudly.

“I’ll answer it. Why don’t the two of you get started in the kitchen.” Hannibal offered, ignoring the look of terror he was getting from Will as he headed straight for the door.

Beverly, in an effort to keep the drama to a minimum, grabbed Will. “Just let him answer the door and stop being weird! It’s your fault they don’t know each other.” She whispered to Will, practically dragging him into the kitchen.

Will tried to get away from Beverly to see what Hannibal was up to at the door, but Beverly yanked on his arm to keep his cool.

Oh my god...oh my god...I’m not ready.

Will painstakingly watched Hannibal dramatically open the door with a slight bow forward then a step backward, prompting a terrified Will to swivel around in the opposite direction in order to void the train wreck he was responsible for.

“Oh my god, Will. Stop *it*. Just chill.” Beverly yanked on him again to face forward, handing him a glass of wine in the process.

Beverly and Will stood out of sight of the front door in an effort to appear normal and calm, you know relaxed, and not anxiously waiting for shit to go down.

“Hello, you must be Molly.” Will could hear Hannibal greeting his girlfriend. He sounded so charming, but Will knew Hannibal was only playing nice.

I’m so fucked…

“Will, please. You look *so* crazy right now.” Beverly pulled on her friend one more time to get him to relax.

Ugh, I wish she would stop yanking on my arm.

“Hi! And you must be Hannibal! I can’t believe I’m finally meeting you!” Molly sounded overly cheerful, but what would you expect from someone who was meeting her boyfriend’s best friend for the first time, ever...and also heard next to nothing about until recently.

Will leaned slightly away from Beverly to peek at Hannibal and Molly greeting each other. He caught Molly giving Hannibal an abrupt hug, which Will was not prepared for. He almost dropped his wine glass as he watched the two people he had been dreading to bring together act...friendly.

“I brought a few things; I hope it fits with what you have planned for Will’s party.” Molly blushed after hugging Hannibal, walked a bit ahead of him, but continued talking to him as if they were good friends.

Hannibal looked at Will and grinned as he followed Molly into the kitchen. Will had to prevent himself from staring back wide eyed. Molly walked up to him, giving him a kiss and a hug that he barely reciprocated.

“I’m sure whatever it is will fit in nicely.” Hannibal was talking to Molly, but he never took his eyes off Will.

The moment should have made Will uncomfortable, yet for some reason he wasn’t. He appreciated the fact that Hannibal was being as nice as possible to Molly. The complete opposite of how he had treated Bedelia...and others.

How is he so calm right now? I remember being such an asshole to Donald...

Beverly caught Will gazing aimlessly at Hannibal and Molly. She took a hold of her friend’s arm, before excusing them from the kitchen.

“Hey, Will. Can I speak to you for a second?” She politely asked, wrapping an arm around her friend to guide him quickly into the hallway.

“Beverly.” Will squirmed a little as Beverly brought him out into the hallway. She had a firm, yet subtle grip on him that he couldn’t escape.

Dammit, she's so strong! "Beverly, what's going on?" Will asked, acting as if he didn't know why his friend had pulled him out into the hallway.

Beverly crossed her arms and lowered her voice. "You need to talk to Molly *now*, Will. Do it now before you embarrass her and possibly yourself at this party."

Will lurched backward as if he had heard some terribly unexpected news. "Beverly, I can't do that. Besides look how well they're getting along. Also, you'll be glad to know that I told Hannibal out in the hallway, before you interrupted us—"

Beverly interrupted Will with a curt scoff.

"—that it's over. We're just friends now and he agreed." Will only paused briefly to let his friend vent her frustration.

"Will, this is going to blow up in your face and you *know* it." Beverly wasn't buying it.

Will glanced at the end of the hallway before placing both hands on Beverly's shoulders, squeezing them gently as if to calm her down. Beverly only rolled her eyes.

"Beverly, I already told you that I'm going to talk to her *after* Hannibal leaves, okay?" Beverly sighed again, almost loud enough for Molly and Hannibal to possibly hear. Will pressed on.

"Like I said to you before, I've already been through this and it sucked. Like ending up in the hospital, ribs broken *sucked*. I can't do that again, I just can't…"

Will felt himself choking up. The memory of the last time he saw Hannibal in person flashed quickly before his eyes.

Freddie doesn't know you the way I know you, Will.

No one knows you the way I know you...

"I can't risk the chance of losing him again…" Will ended, his eyes glistening with tiny warm tears.

"You mean *her*...*not* 'him again'...you don't want to risk the chance of losing *Molly*." Beverly whispered. She felt for her friend; she knew Will wanted to be honest and it sounded like he finally might be.

Will shook his head. In fact, he did mean to say Molly in an attempt to prove he had everything under control, but his subconscious had other plans.

"Wait...what did I say? Of course, Molly..." Will tried to recover.

Fuck, why did I just say that??

Beverly watched Will back away from her, scratching his head. The two of them turned their heads toward the kitchen when they heard both Hannibal and Molly laughing.

“Will…” Beverly began, pleading with her friend to finally make the right decision this weekend.

Will shook his head again as he hugged Beverly. “Beverly, trust me. I have everything under control, okay?” He continued to hug his friend until she hugged him back.

I really shouldn’t let him get away with this, but I can’t force him. Beverly thought to herself.

“Okay…” She murmured slowly.

Will let go of Beverly and smiled. “Great. I knew you would understand. Now let’s go pretend to be sous chefs for Hannibal.” He sounded a lot more gleeful about the idea than necessary, which prompted Beverly to grimace again.

Maybe I should keep an eye on him tonight... She thought to herself as Will led them back into the kitchen.

Over an hour later...

Hannibal, Will, Beverly, and Molly spent the next hour before the rest of the guests arrived, following Hannibal’s prepping instructions. Molly helped Hannibal mostly, which Will noticed immediately. He wasn’t sure if Molly was staying close to Hannibal purposely or genuinely felt at ease around him.

They’re being really friendly…

Will caught out of the corner of his eye Hannibal chuckling again at something Molly said, which wasn’t very funny. He then realized that Hannibal had noticed that he was staring at the two of them instead of organizing the plates of hors d'oeuvres with Beverly out in the living room. Will blushed, averting his eyes from Hannibal’s grinning face.

Or...what if this is some huge plan to get me to let my guard down and then take advantage of me later..?

Hannibal excused himself from Molly before walking over to Will. Will tried to act like he didn’t see him coming over.

“This looks elegant. I’ll have to hire the three of you to cater my next party.” Hannibal said approvingly of the work Will and Beverly had completed.

Molly giggled, Beverly only faked a smile because she was watching Will watch Hannibal, and Will half smiled. Hannibal was standing too close to him, close enough for Will to feel the warmth of Hannibal’s body.

Fuck...

Before turning around to join Molly after observing Beverly and Will's arrangement, Hannibal placed a hand on Will's shoulder and squeezed gently, just enough for Will to blush. Thankfully, he was facing away from Molly, unfortunately he was facing Beverly.

Beverly's eyes screamed "get it together, Will!", forcing Will to duck his head down and swivel his body free from Hannibal's grasp. Before Hannibal could acknowledge the move, the doorbell rang.

"I'll get it!" Will sprinted to the door, almost knocking Hannibal over.

The first to arrive was Jimmy and Brian. They had with them a cache of alcohol left over from the last faculty party. The two of them set up a mini bar in the kitchen per Hannibal's instructions.

Wow! Good thing you got Hannibal, Will. Otherwise, we would be eating cheese whiz and crackers. Jimmy couldn't stop from going on and on about how delicious the food looked.

Honestly, I feel like none of you think I can take care of myself. Will took the joke light heartedly. He knew he wouldn't have been able to pull this off without Hannibal.

You're getting better. Hannibal had paid Will the compliment with a slight pat on the back; a pat that was a little too far down along his backside. Everyone else was too engaged in helping Jimmy and Brian to notice.

The next to arrive were Jack and Bella. They brought with them dessert which was added to the many desserts Hannibal had already prepared. Miriam came in next, happily carrying a bottle of red wine, and Kade came last, complaining about something rather as soon as Will opened the door.

Your place is smaller than I had imagined, but it looks nice…I guess. Kade said to Will, shoving a bottle of wine into his face.

Thanks, Kade. Will had to force himself to smile.

Thanks for hosting, Will! Everything looks amazing. Miriam added as she walked over to greet Beverly.

Everyone at the party naturally split up into different groups. Bella, Jack, and Kade were standing in Will's living room, while Miriam, Molly, and Beverly were standing near the hallway, and Hannibal, Will, Jimmy, and Brian were standing in the kitchen.

Instead of introducing Molly to everyone who hadn't had the pleasure of meeting her yet, Will left her to roam around the party by herself. Beverly had noticed, obviously, but, again, decided not to make a scene. She would only say something if it became an issue later.

Will had forgotten about introducing everyone to Molly because all he could think about was the way Hannibal had looked at him while they were prepping for the party and the way his friend had touched him before the evening began.

This is nice. Almost like when we were roommates in New York…

Will let himself loosen up a bit more, especially aided with the help of the strong cocktails Jimmy had whipped together. He found himself wanting to be near Hannibal again; the tension during this visit slowly dissipated and Will found himself thoroughly enjoying being around his best friend again.

See, Beverly. I have everything under control.

Later in the evening...

After talking to Molly and Miriam for a while, Beverly made her way over to where Bella, Jack, and Kade were standing. She glanced over toward the kitchen and saw that Will hadn't budged from his spot next to Hannibal. And he still hadn't taken the time to introduce Molly to anyone she hadn't met yet.

What the fuck, Will?

Beverly walked into the group as the topic of conversation changed. She hadn't realized that everyone was talking about Hannibal until it was too late.

"Will's boyfriend seems nice." Bella commented. She was standing close to Jack, who had his hand around her waist.

Jack nodded in agreement as Kade huffed a little.

"Well, he is a good chef, I'll give him that." Kade added with a tight curl of her lip. She appeared unimpressed, yet secretly loved the salmon tartare Hannibal had thrown together at the last minute.

Beverly, frozen in complete shock, had no idea what to say without making the conversation awkward.

"He's also *very* attractive." Bella grinned.

Jack laughed. "Well, he is charming."

Beverly tried to inch her way into the conversation, but she couldn't stop everyone from fawning over Hannibal.

Fuck!

"He seems to be the complete opposite of our dear Will." Kade smirked, taking a sip of her cocktail; it was a cocktail Hannibal had made for the party. Kade's constant state of dissatisfaction was cut by a tiny smile brought on by the deliciousness of the drink.

"Opposites attract." Jack responded, giving Bella a quick hug.

Beverly couldn't take it. She knew Molly would eventually hear them, so she interjected.

"Hannibal is Will's best friend," she nervously waved her arms about, "they're not dating." She also laughed nervously.

Everyone looked at each other before Jack spoke up.

"Well, that's a little disappointing. He seems like a great catch." He offered.

Bella nodded and Kade huffed again. The awkwardness of the conversation prompted Jack to bring up work.

"So, we found a funding source for the proposal…" Jack continued onward, but Beverly wasn't paying attention.

She had caught out of the corner of her eye Will laughing loudly at something Hannibal had said. While she was talking to Jack, Bella, and Kade, she had noticed that Molly was still on the other side of the living room speaking to Miriam, while Will was basically flirting with Hannibal in the kitchen.

What the fuck, Will!

At some point during the night, and thanks to Jimmy and Brian providing most of the alcohol, the flirtation between Will and Hannibal had reached a level of extreme behavior. Beverly figured she should mention something to Will.

Beverly excused herself before walking over to the kitchen. She squeezed herself through the group.

"Oh hey, Beverly!" Will shouted, leaning up against Hannibal, basically holding his hand.

Beverly placed a hand on his shoulder. "Will, do you mind if I speak with you for a minute?"

Will nodded his head "yes" as he handed Hannibal his drink. "Everything okay?"

"Yes, I just wanted to talk to you about the thing we were talking about earlier…" She said as she led him away from the group.

Will gulped as he nervously excused himself from the group and followed Beverly into his bedroom. She turned around swiftly as Will closed the bedroom door.

"Will, what the *hell* are you doing?" She demanded, arms crossed.

Will sighed. "*I'm* just having a good time. Isn't that what people expect of me anyway?" He shrugged.

"You *know* what I'm talking about." She crossed her arms waiting for Will to take the hint.

He just looked at her and shrugged again, acting completely clueless.

“Oh my god, Will. *Are* you serious? Everyone out there thinks you and Hannibal are dating.”

Will looked a little shocked but didn’t appear as outraged as Beverly expected him to be.

“Will? *Really* right now?” She uncrossed her arms and placed them on her hips.

Will sighed and rolled his eyes. “We’re not doing anything. I’m just having a good time.” He leaned up against the bed.

Beverly inched toward her friend, wagging her finger. She couldn’t believe the scene Will was making at this party.

He’s being so outrageous right now!

“Will!”

“Okay, Beverly. I’ll be honest...” Will took his time sitting down on the bed.

Beverly joined him. “Thank you!”

Will looked at her and grinned a little even though he was annoyed that she was being overly protective.

“I’m obviously attracted to Hannibal—”

Part Thirty - Eight

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Beverly's eyes widened; she opened her mouth to interject, however, Will hurriedly persisted.

"—*but*, I know where the boundaries lie and I'm not going to cross them. See, I'm being honest." Will rose from the bed before walking toward the door.

Beverly remained on the bed; she wasn't through with the conversation yet. "Will. Thank you for finally be honest, but you can't act the way you're acting right now. You'll embarrass Molly!"

Will sighed before turning around. He crossed his arms as he leaned up against the door. "You're right...I'm sorry…"

Will knew Beverly was right. *I should back off.*

"What…?" Beverly had been so determined to get her friend to see the light that Will's sudden willingness to change his actions had caught her completely off guard.

Will took a step toward her. "You're right...I'll back off…" He walked past Beverly toward his desk, propping himself up against the chair, "...for the first time in a while, I feel like myself again. I hadn't realized how much I missed just being around Hannibal…
but you're right. I'll stop."

Will sighed before crossing his body with one arm. He slowly looked down at his feet, appearing as if he were on the verge of tears. Beverly's demeanor changed; she could tell this was hurting him deeply.

"Let's get back to this party before people start thinking *we're* dating." Will chuckled. Beverly reciprocated the chuckle, because...well, that would never ever happen.

Ugh, Will is so frustrating, but you gotta love him…

"I'm staying with Molly tonight...should probably give Hannibal some space..." Will quickly added with a shrug. In the moment, he had decided that leaving Hannibal alone tonight would give him some time to gather his thoughts.

"Good idea! You guys could spend the whole day together tomorrow." Beverly replied with a genuine smile before turning around to head for the door with Will following closely behind.

Yeah sure, Beverly...

As they both emerged from the hallway, Will could see out of the corner of his eye Hannibal looking for him while he was chatting with Jimmy. Will barely acknowledged his friend as he walked over to where Molly was standing; she was engaged in conversation with Jack and

Bella by the mantlepiece. Will approached the group, giving Molly a tight hug before kissing her on the cheek.

He could still see Hannibal subtly observing him as Jimmy yapped on and on about something he was barely paying attention to. Will figured he should spend some time talking with Molly before joining Hannibal later.

He seems annoyed…

Will watched Hannibal take a sip from his glass before returning to his conversation with Jimmy; Will took it as a sign that maybe he needed to give his friend the benefit of the doubt.

…or maybe I'm overanalyzing the situation…?

"I feel like I haven't seen you all night," Molly joked as Will hugged her, "is everything okay?" She had noticed that her boyfriend and Beverly were missing from the party for a few minutes, apart from Will practically ignoring her all evening.

Will tightened his grasp around Molly. "Yeah, I'm fine*." I'm definitely overanalyzing this...I need to relax...I can always catch up Hannibal later...*

About an hour later…

Before making his way back toward the kitchen, Will had been speaking with Molly, Jack, and Bella for about an hour.

Molly's very nice, Will. Jack had pulled Will off to the side as Bella continued chatting with Molly.

Thanks, Jack... Will couldn't get away from Jack's "father-like" hovering, even after work hours. He did that with everyone, but for some reason, he was more protective of Will...well maybe with the exception of Miriam who was hired around the same time as Will. Actually, both had been hired by Jack.

I don't know if Beverly told you—and you're going to think this is hilarious, trust me—but Kade, Bella, and I thought you were dating your friend, Hannibal!

...ugh...yeah...we tend to get that a lot…

After glancing at his watch, Will took advantage of an opportunity to excuse himself and head for the kitchen. Beverly was now in the kitchen talking to Brian, while Jimmy was still yakking Hannibal's ear off. Will smiled as he approached the group which was reciprocated by everyone, except for Hannibal.

Okay…?

Will stood next to Beverly who was debating about politics with Brian. He nodded his head as if he were also interested in the topic, but kept an eye on Hannibal. After spending a minute observing his friend, Will excused himself before squeezing through Beverly and Brian toward Hannibal. Once on the other side of the kitchen, Hannibal still refused to acknowledge his presence, however, Will pressed on by playfully nudging his best friend with an elbow.

Hannibal finally looked over and half smiled at a grinning Will. *Honestly, Hannibal? Why are you acting so weird right now…?*

Jimmy, wholly oblivious to the awkward moment, continued plummeting Hannibal with questions. “So, Hannibal, you seem to be the type to travel frequently. Ever been to Italy?” He asked, completely unaware of the weight of history behind such a question.

Both Hannibal and Will looked at each other. Will became instantly annoyed as he thought back to photos he had found in Hannibal’s bag. Hannibal, on his part, played off the tension by remaining calm, but he could feel Will’s body temperature rise next to him.

“Indeed, I was recently in Florence this past month.” Hannibal answered, remaining poise as he took a sip out of his cocktail. He knew the answer would bother Will, but he really didn’t care.

Hannibal had only been playing nice since meeting Molly; he could now confirm that Will still had feelings for him, but it became increasingly frustrating that his best friend was still pushing him away. So why not express this by jabbing Will where it hurt the most. And it worked.

This past fucking month?? Will was beside himself. *He was just there and didn’t say anything?!*

“AH! Someday I would like to go there myself. Did you go with your girlfriend? Will mentioned you were seeing someone...” Jimmy exclaimed, still clueless to the emotional shit storm that was upon them.

Will felt like running away from the conversation, but he knew that would only prove to Hannibal that he had struck a nerve.

“I did. We were there for about a few weeks.” Hannibal continued, conveniently leaving out that he and Bedelia had basically broken up for good earlier that day.

Fuck, I’ve had it with him. We’re done. Will angrily thought to himself. *But two can play that game.*

Will coughed to draw attention to himself. Jimmy acknowledged him. “It sounds like you have something to say, Will.” Jimmy was grinning, innocently caught up in Hannibal and Will’s chronic carnal drama.

Will looked down at his drink before commenting. “Hannibal has a...habit...of ‘wining and dining.’ You know, ‘doing the most’.” He casually motioned with air quotes.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow and Jimmy chuckled. “What do you mean?” He looked at Hannibal before swiveling his head back toward Will, rapt with intrigue.

Will shifted on his feet before resuming. He glanced at Hannibal and smirked before looking back at Jimmy.

“Hannibal’s *not* really one for a serious relationship...but he puts whoever he’s seeing on a grand pedestal only to get bored a few weeks later…” he cocked his head to peer at Hannibal, “I mean, I’m surprised Bedelia lasted so long...”

Will flashed a snarky grin before sipping out of his glass. The foray into Hannibal’s past relationships was completely unnecessary, but you’ll remember it been a major talking point in why Will thinks Hannibal would be a terrible boyfriend.

“Wa—” Jimmy tried to ask a question before Hannibal cut him off.

“In truth, Will and I had planned to travel together, but you know Will...he changes his mind constantly,” he glanced at Will and grinned, “it can be extremely frustrating planning with someone who doesn’t know what they want.”

Everyone got completely silent. Jimmy looked at Will then back at Hannibal. Both Will and Hannibal were staring at each other; the stare down became increasingly uncomfortable until Will broke it with a fake laugh. Then Hannibal started laughing, which prompted Jimmy to laugh, even though he was entirely confused as to what the hell was so funny.

“Sorry, Jimmy. Sometimes Hannibal and I jokingly spare in front of others...you know how it is between close friends.” Will half explained before slapping Hannibal hard on the back. Hannibal jerked forward almost spilling his drink on his shirt as Will excused himself.

Not so calm now, are you?

Jimmy watched Will saunter away before turning toward Hannibal, but before he could say anything, Hannibal interrupted him to also excuse himself, leaving Jimmy alone in the kitchen.

“Wait...what just happened…?” He muttered to himself. He then shrugged before making himself another drink.

Will ignored Hannibal the rest of the night; he was preparing himself for an eventual confrontation with his “best friend” after everyone left, ditching his plans to go home with Molly.

That fucking jerk. I can’t make up my mind? I fucking can’t believe him...

Or Will tried to ignore Hannibal the rest of the night. From time to time, he would either catch himself staring at Hannibal or vice versa; the tension between the two of them nearly choked the life out of the party. It got to a point where if one was brought into a conversation, the other would leave or make a snide comment. Beverly began to notice, but told herself not to get involved; it would only make whatever was happening even worse.

After another hour or so, thankfully, the party died down. Kade had left early, which relieved some of the workplace tension, yet it became increasingly awkward for anyone to talk to Will and/or Hannibal, both of whom were acting like immature grown babies.

“Welp, I think I’m ready for bed.” Miriam signaled after a moment of trying to have a conversation with Hannibal before Will showed up rolling his eyes about something his friend had said.

Everyone who wasn’t either Will or Hannibal nodded in unison; the party wound down as people gathered their belongings.

“You know this wasn’t so bad, Will.” Brian joked as he slapped Will on the shoulder before following Jimmy out of the apartment.

“Yeah, I definitely had fun. Especially talking to Hannibal.” Jimmy chimed in.

“You mean basically *stalking* him. Did you get his social security number, too?” Brian corrected, lightheartedly shoving past his friend.

Jimmy rolled his eyes, stopping in his tracks to contemplate his actions from the night. “I wasn’t that clingy…”

Will didn’t respond. He merely looked behind himself to see that only Beverly and Molly were left, talking to Hannibal in the kitchen. Beverly saw Will watching them, taking it as a clue that maybe she should leave too.

“Hey, I’m going to head out.” Beverly said, grabbing her coat. She walked up to Will.

“You’re still staying over at Molly’s, right?” She asked Will as she put her coat on.

Will nodded; he was lying, of course. He didn’t verbally respond to her either...all he could think about was confronting Hannibal as soon as everyone else left.

“Okay, goodnight.” Beverly hugged Will before leaving the apartment. As Will closed the door behind his friend, he heard Molly laughing with Hannibal in the kitchen.

That fucking asshole...

“Hey, Will! I think I’m ready to go home.” Molly walked to the front door after hugging Hannibal goodbye, provoking Will to grimace with a slight eye roll.

Will opened the door for Molly and followed her out. He slowly closed the door behind him. Molly looked at him, confused by his change in behavior.

“...I think I’m going to stay here tonight...Hannibal isn’t here for much longer and...you know…” Will let the sentence hang in the air, as if Molly could possibly know what he was talking about.

I hope she buys that...

They both stood in silence, Will shuffling back and forth on his feet; Molly stifling a cough.

"...that makes sense, I guess…"

Will leaned forward to give her a quick kiss on the cheek. "Goodnight, Molly. I'll see you for dinner tomorrow."

Molly pulled away a little to face her boyfriend. "Well don't forget that you promised to go shopping with me tomorrow for my apartment." She was kind of grinning; Will could tell she was a little annoyed.

He bit his lip. *Shit, I completely forgot.* "Yep! That's right. I'll see you in the morning." He answered, rubbing the back of his head.

"Okay, goodnight…" Molly murmured.

Will gave her another hug before waving goodbye as he opened the door to his apartment. Molly waved back as he closed the door.

He shut the door tight behind him, waiting a few moments before he knew Molly out of earshot. He could see Hannibal in the kitchen already cleaning up.

That bastard. I can't believe him...

Will was blinded by fury. He couldn't believe that Hannibal still hadn't personally mentioned anything to him about Florence, and that he had to learn about it along with someone else. His fumes carried him to the kitchen; he couldn't stop the force of anger rising in his core.

"I *can't* believe you went to Florence without me!" Will shouted immediately as he marched into the kitchen.

Hannibal, slowly turning around to see what the fuss was about, even though he knew it was coming, said nothing for a while as Will continued to bitch.

"I knew you were looking through my bag." Hannibal retorted finally.

Will couldn't contain his anger. He clenched his fist, but it didn't help.

"I can't believe you went without me and with *Bedelia*. Are you fucking kidding me, Hannibal? What the fuck?"

"Why would we go on that trip together if we weren't speaking to one another?" Hannibal responded. He stood unflinching in place as Will paced back and forth.

"It's not the fact that you still went, I get it. But you went with someone else and you guys looked like you were fucking the entire time!" Will shouted, throwing his hands up in the air, "Bedelia was more willing to give details...like what the *fuck* is that about?"

"Why do you care? You made your choice...and a very poor one at that." Hannibal chose not to acknowledge Will's comment about having sex with Bedelia during the trip. It wasn't true;

all Hannibal could think about while in Florence was Will.

Will whipped around to face Hannibal. “Fuck you, Hannibal. You’re the one who threw a fit!” Referring back to their fight from a year ago.

Hannibal stared at Will before turning slightly away. “You’re awfully quick to blame for someone who failed to inform his girlfriend about his best friend.”

Will jerked backward, complete shock written on his face. “You *can’t* be serious…” He clenched his fist even tighter, “you know how difficult it was for me to honest the last time and I got into a car accident as a result!”

Hannibal crossed his arms and sighed. “And I’m sorry that happened, honestly, I wish I could have been there for you, but you tend to play the victim, Will. Don’t you think it would have been appropriate to be honest beforehand, instead of making a scene?”

Will continued to fume, he really didn’t want to hear what Hannibal had to say. Hannibal could feel Will’s resistance, but he continued.

“It’s as if I don’t know you...”

Shut the fuck up, Hannibal.

“Someone so close to me...and I’m never enough for you...”

Wait...what…?

Will’s expression changed slightly; he relaxed his fists, unconsciously listening to Hannibal plead his case.

“...the saddest thing is to be a minute to someone when you’ve made them your eternity…and losing you seems to be my only option...” Hannibal ended, eyes never looking away from Will.

“Hannibal…” Will hadn’t expected to hear Hannibal be so open about his feelings again.

He felt his heart sink and he struggled to recover from the moment. It was true that he had been pushing his friend away for years; the moment felt different compared to the last time Hannibal had revealed that he was in love with him.

Suddenly, memories of trying to forget Hannibal that past year resurfaced, and Will’s finally emotions bubbled to the surface.

Ugh, fuck…

Will’s eyes closed, swelling with hot tears again. He thought about the university cafe sandwich that sort of, but not really, tasted like the ones Hannibal used to make; finding Hannibal’s clothes in his closet; remembering the day they found Winston whenever he even looked at Winston; struggling to read through a whole letter from Abigail because she

reminded him so much of Hannibal...everything was coming back and he couldn't take it anymore.

I can't take this anymore. Will wavered, he swayed a bit on his feet, attempting to keep himself together, but failing miserably.

"Will…?" Hannibal asked softly, taking a step toward his friend.

Ugh, fuck...this is way too much...

"Hannibal, I think about you constantly. Every single day, my thoughts are consumed with how your life is like, whether you're seeing someone, whether you miss me…"

Will finally blurted out. He knew he sounded stupid, but the words uncontrollably spilled out of his mouth.

"I wish we could have gone together on our trip…I was so stupid to choose Freddie over you…" He felt like he was going to pass out; he hadn't been this emotional since over a year ago. He covered his face with his hands, but the tears streamed through his fingers.

"I miss you so much, Hannibal. You have no idea how much—"

But before Will could finish his thought, Hannibal had gracefully bounded across the kitchen into the living room to take a firm hold of Will. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal's neck, closing his eyes as he felt his best friend's warm lips on his, feeling Hannibal place one hand behind his head and the other hand around his waist, caressing slowly.

Chapter End Notes

So I had originally written this chapter as more emotional, but I figured the dynamic between a bitchy Will and an equally bitchy Hannibal would be both angsty as well as a little funny...until it's just the two of them and they really have to face their feelings...then things get overly emotional, punching you in the feels.

Part Thirty - Nine

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little long... :p

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will sensed his body growing limp from the kiss, melting into Hannibal's firm grip on his waist. He lost himself within Hannibal's touch; feeling his best friend pull him closer towards his own body. Hannibal squeezed Will, which elicited a quaint moan from his friend, who then responded by rubbing Hannibal's cheek with a soft hand.

Hannibal drew Will tighter against his body, which Will thought was physically impossible. As he lost himself further into the hold, Will forgot about Florence, Bedelia, and especially Molly, thinking instead about the last time he and Hannibal had fucked...or even just last time they slept together in the same bed.

I can't sleep with you next to me like this…

...you'll be fine, Hannibal...

Will's mind also conjured up images of the two of them with Abigail, before she left to live with her adopted family. They had basically been their own version of a family, at one point spending most weekends together...but now...all of that was in the past...

The thought tormented Will as he sank more into Hannibal's arms, unnerved by memories that still haunted him since he and Hannibal last saw each other. Hannibal, aware of his friend's palpable anguish, held onto Will even tighter. The act comforted Will as he hugged Hannibal back.

Why can't it always be like this?

After briefly reconciling with his feelings, Will placed a light hand on Hannibal's chest to break himself way. He proceeded to look down at his feet, embarrassed that he had allowed himself to become so upset. He blinked as remaining tears dropped to the ground; the hand on Hannibal's chest bunching up his shirt as he held onto his friend to support himself.

Fuck...I can't control myself…

Will continued to sob a bit longer, shielding his eyes with his free hand, until he felt Hannibal stroking his chin in between his thumb and index finger. Will let Hannibal tilt his head upward, but he was too terrified to look directly into Hannibal's eyes; he feared he looked weepy from the intense reconnection with his best friend.

Will closed his eyes tighter to prevent more tears from escaping. *I miss being this close.*

Finally, after finding the courage to face Hannibal head on in such a vulnerable state, Will opened his eyes. He was met with a kind loving smile, a smile he hadn't seen up close in what felt like years.

"...H-Hannibal…" Will began, choking on his friend's name, but relishing in how sweet it sounded during an intimate moment such as this.

Hannibal patiently waited for him to continue, softly rubbing Will's chin with his thumb before slowly caressing his bottom lip.

"...should we...go to my bedroom…?" Will whispered, almost to himself, partly hoping that Hannibal would mistake his words, still unsure what his best friend wanted from their present relationship.

Hannibal didn't answer right away, letting the air in between them settle; however he silently let Will know that it was okay for him to expose himself and his feelings like he had done when they were close. Will felt his anxiety dissipate, allowing Hannibal to lift his head once again with one hand. Hannibal leaned downward to kiss Will, guiding him back into his arms before breaking away.

"After you." Hannibal offered at last, delivering the line in voice that almost forced Will to his knees, weak from Hannibal's gaze.

Fuck...

Will managed to keep himself together, just enough to tug on Hannibal's collar before taking a hold of his best friend's hand. He took his time leading them toward his bedroom, hyper aware of the sexual energy emanating from Hannibal.

Once they reached the door, Will opened it right before Hannibal scooped him up, landing them both on top of the bed. Will laughed, he couldn't help himself; Hannibal had always been this playful when they were having sex.

Will laid on his back as Hannibal got on top of him, slowly rubbing his body downward into his. Will grabbed the back of Hannibal's neck, stroking gently as he continued to kiss his friend. They laid on the bed, dry humping each other while making out for a few more minutes.

Will couldn't help himself as he moaned into Hannibal's mouth, intertwining his tongue with his, gasping for air as the kiss intensified. He wrapped his legs around Hannibal's waist, using the move to flip their bodies around so that he was now on top, slowly grinding down into Hannibal's crotch.

Fuck, Hannibal...

"God, Hannibal…"

Will leaned forward, panting as he humped Hannibal harder, feeling his erection wanting to free itself. He felt Hannibal from down below, feeling his friend's hard cock ram itself up against his ass with every motion.

Will fumbled trying to take off his shirt, casting it off to the side before helping Hannibal with his. He leaned downward to kiss Hannibal before removing the rest of their clothes, struggling to get everything off as quickly as possible; his body wanted to feel everything his best friend had to offer.

As he bent over to kiss Hannibal again, Will reached downward to grab both of their cocks, which were hardening from rutting up against each other. Will gasped as he rubbed himself and Hannibal together, grinding his body downward at the same time. Hannibal held onto Will, never talking his eyes off him as their bodies reacted to the passionate sensation of Will stroking them in unison.

"Fuck…" Will groaned. He had never felt such ardor from merely feeling himself up against Hannibal, though it had usually felt this great in the past. Maybe he hadn't realized how much he missed having sex with his best friend…

Hannibal moaned, grasping Will's ass, rubbing his hands up and down as his hips humped into Will's body. After a few moments of impassioned dry humping, Hannibal slowed his pace, taking a moment to squeeze Will's body. Will felt the change in pace, opening his eyes to see why Hannibal had ceased humping his body. Hannibal ran a hand up his chest, stopping briefly along the way to Will's chin to circling one of Will's nipples with his index finger. Will shuddered, closing his eyes again, letting his lips part. He felt Hannibal rub his lips with one finger before running a hand through his hair.

"I miss seeing you like this…" Hannibal whispered. Although he had slowed the upward movement of his hips into Will's ass, he kept a steady pace, a pace that continued to send shivers down Will's spine. Will opened his eyes, moaning softly.

"...the way you look when we're intimate...it makes me jealous that others have seen you this way…" Hannibal let his sentence hang, pressing his index finger back into Will's lips, who briefly let his tongue slip to suck on Hannibal's finger.

In response, Hannibal squeezed Will even tighter with the one hand on his ass. "I love you, Will. I always have..."

Will didn't react right away. It felt like a similar moment when Hannibal confessed his true feelings during sex, but it wasn't quite the same. Having been separated from Hannibal for so long let Will dropped his guard a little. Besides, he missed his friend and he did care for him...maybe there was something there he had been afraid of admitting?

"...I-I love you...too, Hannibal…" Will answered sincerely, this time.

Instead of responding verbally, Hannibal gently flipped Will over onto his back, using his hand to guide his head. Will whimpered as Hannibal then left kisses up along his body, starting at his waist and ending in the middle of his chest. Will watched Hannibal with

anticipation, he wasn't sure what was coming next; his body wanting more by pushing up into his best friend's.

Hannibal smiled at Will before leaning downward, using one hand to brace the side of Will's body as the other lightly grazed one of Will's nipples. Will shuddered again, putting his hand up against his mouth, trying to prevent himself from crying out loud. It shocked him that such a simple act caused his body to quiver.

Hannibal grinned before lowering his head to meet Will's other nipple. He felt Will's body subtly shake underneath, begging him to keep going, Will still softly whimpering for contact.

Will closed his eyes even tighter as he felt Hannibal flick his nipple with his tongue, doing so a couple of times before trailing his tongue around its base. Will flinched. *Fuck.* He knew he wouldn't be able to last if Hannibal kept going; Hannibal knew this was one of his weak spots.

"...H-Hannibal…" Will moaned, placing one hand on his backside, rubbing the back of his friend's neck as he continued to suck on him.

Hannibal hummed back, shifting his position slightly, pinching the other nipple with his fingers before lightly flicking Will again with his tongue.

Fuck. Fuck… "...oh...my god...Hannibal…" Will had his head turned, pressed downward into his pillow, but still kept his hand on Hannibal's back.

He felt Hannibal shift again, a move that was quickly followed by the spreading of his legs. Will groaned. *Fuck.* He knew what was coming next. *There's no way I'll be able to last…*

A soft cry left Will's lips as Hannibal entered him with the press of a thumb. Will's ass bobbed up and down, pushing itself up against Hannibal's thumb.

As he fingered Will, Hannibal continued to suck on both nipples, rounding the base of each, taking his time grating against Will's skin with his teeth, eliciting louder moans from his friend who wiggled helplessly underneath.

Hannibal entered one finger then another; Will couldn't take it; he knew he would come any minute if this went on further.

"Ah…H-Hannibal...s-stop...I think I might come…" He blurted out in between gasps.

"It's all right, we have all night…" Hannibal whispered into Will's ear, pumping his fingers in and out of his friend at a faster pace.

Fuck, I'm definitely not going to last now... Will thought, moaning louder.

Will felt his body tense up even more, the sensation skyrocketed from his cock to his brain, almost exploding from the passion he felt with Hannibal. The feeling then pulsated throughout his body, ending with a short spurt and loud gasp as Will released himself.

“Ah...ah…Ah!” He tried to muffle his cries, but it was no use. Hannibal continued to scissor his fingers inside his body, causing him to buck up and down as he came.

Hannibal kissed Will on the forehead as his fingers retreated. Will laid panting on the sheets, wiggling his hips from side to side.

Fuck...I can’t believe I came so early… However, Will wasn’t done. He wanted more from Hannibal.

“How was that?” Hannibal asked coyly, obviously already aware of the answer.

Will smirked as he turned his head to kiss Hannibal. “I think you already know the answer…”

After a few more kisses along Hannibal’s neck, Will maneuvered himself to get on top of his friend. He smiled before leaning downward to kiss Hannibal again, feeling his head being pulled gently while being caressed from below.

Will straightened up, running a hand up Hannibal’s chest. He bit his bottom lip, pushed down with his hips up against his friend before turning around. He felt Hannibal grab him from behind and squeeze his body as he leaned downward towards Hannibal’s cock.

Hannibal moaned as Will straddled his body before licking him up and down, rubbing his own cock into Hannibal’s chest. Hannibal felt Will up from behind, running his hands up along Will’s legs to his ass, trailing a finger down the middle.

Will moaned from the sensation of Hannibal’s fingers inside him again before he felt the bottom half of his body pull downward. He stopped licking Hannibal as soon as he felt his friend lapping him from behind. *Fuck.*

Will shot one hand downward into the bed to hold himself up. *Fuck.* The sensation of Hannibal’s tongue shot a current through his body and he had to stop himself from pushing backward, forgetting to suck Hannibal’s cock.

Will felt his cheeks spread apart a little, Hannibal moaning into his body, rubbing his ass before using his fingers to penetrate Will in between licks. Will moaned with Hannibal inside his mouth, closing his eyes tightly, reacting to Hannibal’s tongue.

Hannibal’s body became tense under Will, which he took as a sign to suck even harder. Hannibal had practically rendered him a mess from earlier and he wanted payback. Will doubled down on top, shoving his ass further into his friend’s face. He then gripped Hannibal’s cock with one hand, stroking up and down, while still sucking on the tip. Will smiled when he heard Hannibal groan.

Will’s head bobbed up and down with the movement of Hannibal’s hips; his hold on his best friend becoming more firm with every moan. Hannibal’s body tensed even more; he grabbed Will’s ass, rubbing his hands up and down his backside as his body convulsed from an orgasm.

Will let Hannibal's cock fall out of his mouth after swallowing; he leaned backward again feeling Hannibal slowly rub his ass as he shuddered through his release.

Will turned around, he was grinning. "Let's take a shower."

Hannibal looked flustered; it was an expression Will hadn't seen in awhile. *Fuck, he's so hot.*

Will held out his hand, still smiling at his friend. "I feel like this is a trap." Hannibal replied as he accepted the hand. Will only chuckled.

We'll see...

He led Hannibal out of the bedroom toward the bathroom. He stopped to look behind himself, grinning uncontrollably from how sexy Hannibal looked standing naked in his hallway. He tried to push the door open, but Hannibal grabbed him from behind and spun him around. The door to the bathroom opened with Hannibal practically carrying Will inside.

Will tried to break away, gently using one hand to softly push himself away from Hannibal. He smiled before reaching into the shower to turn the water on. Hannibal grabbed him from behind, humping him slowly.

Will reached behind himself to rub his hands along Hannibal's body as they both stepped into the shower. Almost immediately, Hannibal had Will pinned up against the wall, thrusting his body into his cock. Will gasped, wrapping both arms around Hannibal's neck, humping back. *Fuck.* He felt Hannibal rimming him from below with one finger, before entering two into his ass.

"Ah...ah...fuck…" Will pressed up against the wall, still holding onto Hannibal, the shower head cascading water down along their bodies.

Hannibal lifted Will on top of a protrusion in the shower where Will usually kept his shower items, but they got knocked over as soon as his ass hit the surface. Will wrapped his legs around Hannibal's body, feeling Hannibal enter him slowly, using the water as lubricant.

"...ugh...fuck...Hannibal...you feel amazing…" Will murmured, whimpering from Hannibal pumping his cock in and out of his ass.

Hannibal sped up the motion as Will's body further accepted him; their bodies glued together as they fucked for what felt like a glorious eternity in the shower.

Fuck...I'm going to come again... Will's body shuddered, he squeezed Hannibal tighter with his legs and arms, sliding back and forth on the protrusion.

Hannibal came first, with Will following closely behind. They held onto each other, panting.

"W-we...haven't done that since—"

"Chicago…I remember." Hannibal interrupted Will as he leaned forward to kiss him.

They made out for a moment longer before Will slumped down into the base of the tub, pulling Hannibal down with him. Hannibal chuckled as he let Will yank him downward into a sitting position. Will reached over to change the water flow from the shower head to the bath faucet. They sat next to each, Will rubbing Hannibal's arm before positioning himself to sit in between his friend's legs.

"This is a nice fit…" Hannibal murmured as he rubbed Will's waist with one hand while he played with his hair with the other.

Will leaned backward to rest his head on Hannibal's chest; he took advantage of being in the tub by washing his body along with Hannibal's.

"Remember when we found Winston…?" Will whispered, dipping his hand in the rising water before stroking Hannibal's arm.

Hannibal rubbed his chin up against the top of his friend's head. "Of course…" He squeezed Will closer to his body as Will continuing rubbing his limbs.

Will almost moaned out loud from Hannibal pressing up against him but refrained. He couldn't believe the way Hannibal made his body feel.

"...Abigail and I had been so hell bent to go back for him...it was cute trying to convince you…" Will rubbed Hannibal's thigh as he kept one hand on the arm crossed around his waist.

Hannibal squeezed Will again and laughed. "You remember, it was raining."

"It wasn't *that* bad…" Will straightened up before turning around to face Hannibal.

"It was pretty bad." Hannibal retorted, leaving his hands on Will's waist.

Fuck, he's so hot... That memory of finding Winston with Hannibal and Abigail had been one Will held onto the most. The way Hannibal looked that night after they gave their dog a bath was similar to the way he looked now.

Fuck...

Will grinned as he leaned downward to kiss Hannibal. "Come on...let's go back to the bed…"

Hannibal reached up to caress Will's cheek. He smiled, which melted Will's heart. "Okay…"

They made out again before getting out of the tub, drying each other off before heading back to the bedroom. Will opted to sleep naked, which was fine with Hannibal because he was planning to sleep naked anyway.

Hannibal lifted the covers for Will to get into the bed first, following his friend promptly after. Will settled into Hannibal's body; the scent from the shower (and sex) lingered, causing his body to shudder thinking about Hannibal being inside of him, the way his friend moaned when he went down on him.

Fuck. Will almost whispered out loud, but, thankfully, kept to himself. He felt Hannibal slipped an arm around his waist, pulling him close towards his body. Will smiled as Hannibal lightly kissed the back of his neck.

This is going to sound so stupid. Will thought to himself. Reminiscing about the past with Hannibal had materialized a silly idea that maybe the two of them—

"What if you moved back here...again…?" Will finally asked, shuffling around to see Hannibal's reaction.

It was pitch black in bedroom, but Will could still make out the outline of Hannibal's jaw line along with the slight curve of his lips.

"...I mean...I don't expect us to be roommates again…" Will let out a curt laugh, he felt awkward for bringing the thought up, "...you know since we don't *need* too…"

Hannibal paused before answering, which caught Will off guard.

Fuck, maybe that wasn't the right thing to say...

"I wouldn't mind having the opportunity to see you every day…" He murmured softly.

Will smiled, relieved, as Hannibal kissed his neck. The thought was enticing; he did miss seeing Hannibal every day. Hannibal rubbed Will's waist, Will only hummed back as he felt his body succumbing to sleep, completely relaxed from the night.

"We should talk about it later…" Hannibal added quietly.

"Hmm…" Will purred, relishing in the tickling sensation of Hannibal rubbing his body, not really acknowledging his friend's last statement. Exhausted from messing around with Hannibal, he felt himself falling deep into sleep...until he felt a hand on his semi-hard cock.

"H-Hannibal…" Will managed through a haze, realizing that Hannibal was stroking him.

Hannibal licked the back of Will's neck before nibbling on his ear.

"...ah…fuck…" Will put his hand over his mouth after he gasped; he was already sensitive from the last two times he came, but his body accepted the touch wholeheartedly.

Hannibal kissed the back of Will's neck, which sent shivers down his spine, speeding up the pumping motion of his hand on Will's cock. Will bucked his ass backward into Hannibal's body, moaning from his cock growing harder.

Hannibal rubbed Will a little longer before licking two fingers on his other hand. He slowly maneuvered the hand down Will's backside, pressing the fingers against Will's hole.

"Ah!...ah…" Will didn't expect Hannibal to fuck him with his fingers again.

Hannibal proceeded to pump his fingers in and out of Will, holding onto his squirming friend.

“Fuck, Hannibal...fuck…”

Fuck...I think I’m going to come again.

Will reached behind to grab Hannibal’s backside. Hannibal continued to stroke his cock while fucking him with his fingers. He tried to last a little longer even though he was tired, but his body shivered and shuddered with passion.

“Ah...fuck...Hannibal...I think I’m going to come ag—” However before Will could finish his thought, he came all over Hannibal’s hand, panting while bucking his ass into Hannibal.

“I love the way you sound…” Hannibal whispered, “we can sleep now...” He added playfully.

Will managed a weak laugh, considering his body had been ravaged. *Fuck.* “Thanks, Hannibal…” he sarcastically replied. He turned slightly to kiss Hannibal, caressing his friend’s cheek as they both moaned into each other’s mouths.

Will bit his lip again before turning back over. He let out a sleepy sound, a sound of relief from finally acting out on the painful sexual tension that had been driving a wedge between himself and Hannibal all weekend.

As Hannibal pulled him closer towards his body, nuzzling his nose through his hair, Will forgot why he had pushed his best friend away. They were great together before and after they had started having sex; the memories weren’t enough to replace the feeling of just being around Hannibal.

God, I miss him so much...

He snuggled up more against Hannibal’s crotch; his ass fitting nicely into the curve his best friend’s body made, as if finally finding and fitting in the last piece to a complex jigsaw puzzle.

“Goodnight, Will.” Hannibal whispered into his ear, Will giggling softly from Hannibal’s breath lightly tickling his skin.

“Goodnight, Hannibal…I love you…” Will replied, settling more into the embrace.

The two of them finally drifted off to a peaceful sleep, both forgetting about the world around them. Will finally felt less anxious; he felt truly like himself again. He forgot about the drama that had occurred during the party and the past weekend...forgetting about the fight with Hannibal from over a year ago...and especially forgetting that he was still seeing Molly...

END OF VOLUME TWO

Chapter End Notes

cold water

Like my stories? Leave me a tip or comment (I appreciate both :D)

Vol. Three - Part Forty

Chapter Notes

Hope you enjoy this next volume. Thank you so much for reading.

--lady_slice

But I wanted to...nothing was stopping me…

“What do you think about being friends with benefits?”

The weight of Will’s words stiffly filled the air, but Hannibal didn’t blink. Will was sitting on top of his best friend, still squeezing Hannibal’s body with his knees as he peered downward at him. Hannibal’s eye roll from before gave way to an unreadable slate.

He’s being so dramatic right now...

Will allowed the question to linger; he knew it was bothering Hannibal, the idea of not having him completely. However, Will didn’t care; he was mostly concerned about his own feelings, afraid of getting hurt even though his best friend was in love with him (and he was too stubborn to fucking notice).

I’m not giving in this easily.

Yet, Hannibal managed to hold onto his resolve, even as Will slowly pushed downward into his lap, waiting for an answer as he bit his bottom lip. Hannibal cocked his head to the side in response to the move, which only prompted Will to moan a little.

…but why is it taking so long for him to budge? Will quickly thought to himself, puzzled by his friend’s behavior; he thought he would be able to shake Hannibal right about now, especially since he hadn’t explained himself entirely.

Hannibal’s facade remained unflinching; on the inside, however, he felt absolutely horrible. He truly did love Will (he always had), but instead of showing it, he decided to play along with his best friend’s game. Hannibal knew that this could possibly backfire in their faces, but he also feared pushing Will away if he were completely honest.

I may just give him what he wants. Hannibal thought to himself without breaking a sweat.

“That’s an interesting take on our relationship.” He mused with a slight grin, catching his best friend off guard a bit. Will had expected an answer like that from Hannibal, but a small part of him wanted to see his best friend squirm a little... just a little.

That's all you've got?

"If you think about it, our relationship has been that way for a while now."

Meant as a joke, but soon regretted, almost immediately, Will winced as the words left his mouth. The emotion he had felt when he first tried to be in a relationship with Hannibal resurfaced; memories of crying in front of his best friend after learning the truth about Abel Gideon, while Hannibal attempted to console him, had pushed him onto an onslaught of tears.

I don't think I can do this…

What do you mean?

My chest hurts every time I think about Frederick or Abel...they'll be here and I won't be…

Will, I wouldn't betray you…I don't know why you would think I would…

Hannibal…I can't…I'm sorry…

If you think about it, our relationship has been that way for a while now...

Will tried to keep his cool, but he knew he didn't sound confident enough. As the silence lingered again, Hannibal only stared back at him, leaving his hands on Will's body, lighting caressing his skin.

And that's all he has to say...?

After what felt like forever, Hannibal allowed a slight smirk to break his expression again, sending an already shaky Will reeling.

What?

Maybe Hannibal never cared about his feelings and was only using him for sex this entire time...

Fuck…I'm so stupid...

"I suppose you're correct…" Hannibal said softly.

Will couldn't believe how well Hannibal was handling the situation. It immediately confirmed everything he thought about his best friend and the way he had treated people he slept with and/or had a relationship with.

Fuck it…

Will hopped off the bed before leaning over to kiss Hannibal on the lips, teasing his friend a little before sharply pulling away. He couldn't let Hannibal see his confidence crumble.

I guess our relationship is only about sex now…fine, fuck it.

“I’m serious. All we need are a couple of rules and then we can have fun.” Will playfully offered, yet still stinging from the way Hannibal was behaving.

He walked over to Hannibal’s dresser, finding a pair of clean boxers and a t-shirt to wear, further sending shivers down his best friend’s spine.

Hannibal crossed his arms behind his head to steady himself. “Okay, what do you propose?” He inquired, eyeing Will intently.

Will briefly scrunched up his face before faking an air of nonchalant-ness.

Wow, fuck you, Hannibal…

“We only sleep with each other unless we’re serious about someone else. Then we stop. It’s that simple.”

Will replied with a slight wave of his hand. He tried coming off casual, but his emotions were tearing him apart on the inside.

“Really.” Hannibal commented. It was said more as a statement than a question as he watched his friend get dressed.

“Sure. We both have exhibited moments of...self-control.” Will said slyly, mostly implying that Hannibal or himself (or both really) were guided more by their emotions than rationality. Which was basically true, given how they had interacted with each other a great deal of their complicated relationship.

I can’t stand this anymore...I thought I could do this...I thought he cared about me?

Will didn’t wait for a reply from Hannibal. Instead, he exited the bedroom swiftly before heading straight for the bathroom out in the hallway. As soon as the door closed behind him, he stared at himself in the mirror before turning the shower on, sighing loudly to himself. Will yanked off Hannibal’s shirt and boxers, nearly tossing them across the bathroom.

Why the fuck did I put his clothes on? I’m such a fucking mess. Will had to brace himself up against the sides of the shower before slowly stepping in.

As the water hit his body, Will sulked, thinking about the way Hannibal had looked at him when he proposed fucking for fun.

What do you think about being friends with benefits?

Ugh, this fucking sucks. Will let his body sink to the base of the tub as he let out a painful moan. He dragged his legs up to his chest, burying his head in between the caps of his knees. He could fill warm tears fill his eyes; not really understanding why he was so upset right now.

I thought I wanted this, but why do I feel so horrible right now…?

Will wasn't sure what he wanted from Hannibal; their relationship was all over the place ever since they first had sex and this was just another indicator of it being even more fucked up than he had realized.

I definitely lost my best friend...

Will groaned again as he rested his head against the wall of the shower, letting the water cascade down along his body as he quietly sobbed to himself.

About an hour later...

After taking his time in the bathroom, Will steadily emerged out into the hallway, spotting Hannibal in the kitchen, cleaning up the dinner mess from last night.

Fuck, I forgot we went straight to bed last night.

Will took his time approaching the entry of the kitchen, careful not to make a sound, however, Hannibal heard him right away.

Fuck...why didn't I just hide out in my room to wait for him to leave??

"Is there still hot water left?" Hannibal asked, no inflection in voice, implying that Will had been in the shower longer than normal. He was facing the sink, washing the pots and pans from the dinner he had prepared for Will, conveniently ignoring the conversation from about an hour ago.

Jesus, Hannibal. Really?

"Yes." Will answered back sharply, as he walked past Hannibal to get to one of the cabinets.

He pulled out a bowl for cereal as he watched his friend clean a pot in the sink. He was almost finished cleaning from last night, so Will didn't bother offering to help. Also, he wanted to get the fuck out of there as quickly as possible.

Yep, should have definitely headed straight for my room.

"Actually, I don't think I have enough time to shower here...also, I'll probably be home later than usual tonight." Hannibal said with his back still facing Will.

"Oh. Didn't know you had to work today." Will barely said out loud as he moved from the counter to the fridge.

Also, I wasn't in there that long...

“Yes, so don’t wait up for me.” Hannibal replied, drying his hands after he finished washing the pot. He said nothing more as he briskly left the kitchen.

Will waited for his friend to exit before turning away from the fridge. He sighed as he dumped his cereal in the sink. All of a sudden, he wasn’t hungry anymore.

Fuck...ugh. What am I going to do?

Will leaned forward over the sink to rest his elbows on the edge. He groaned as he rubbed his face with his hands.

Their constant flirtation with one another flew out the window, now that it had been established that they’re still sexually attracted to one another...and apparently all Will could think about was sex...but then again, Hannibal had been with a lot of people (well more than Will) so he shouldn’t be so weird about this because he also wanted to have casual sex all the time too, right?—

Oh my god! Stop! Will screamed in his head. The emotional gymnastics were tiring and all he wanted to do was lie down.

I have too much shit to think about on top of this... Will decided it was probably best that he wouldn’t see Hannibal tonight...maybe he could avoid his friend until he had some time to grasp the gravity of the situation.

Fuck me…

Meanwhile...

Hannibal walked into his bedroom to grab his work bag. He stood by his bed, thinking about the way Will looked last night while having sex in the kitchen…then later in his bed.

I’m not going to take it easy, Will…

I’ve been waiting too long for this, and I’m not going to hold back.

He had lost control over his emotions while interacting with Will just a minute ago, giving more attitude than he usually allowed during tense situations because Hannibal still feared pushing Will away.

Maybe this is what he wants? He thought as he leaned over to swing his bag around his shoulders.

Hannibal figured it was best to give Will some space to think things through. He told himself he would accept whatever Will wanted with their relationship after letting his friend to come to him first. He sighed heavily before exiting his bedroom to catch a train to the hospital.

The next day...

Will decided to head over to the university early before his shift started at the psych clinic. That summer, Will had applied for an internship at the clinic, hoping to broaden his professional network (oh and it was mostly a degree requirement that he had dreaded filing, but hey, *viva* professional advancement, right?). It was his first day and, unfortunately, he was stressed about Hannibal and not the work.

Before the night they had sex last, Will usually made an effort to say bye to Hannibal before leaving their apartment, if his best friend hadn't already left for the hospital. Yet, the awkwardness of Will's proposal flooded over into the next day, driving a wedge further between the two best friends. Will feared running into Hannibal and having to make small talk instead of talking about the state of their relationship. So, the two had avoided each other all last night and most of the morning.

Will took the train over to the campus, yawning the entire trip over because he couldn't sleep last night; tossing and turning over having to get up early and stressing about Hannibal all night.

I need to stop thinking about this...it's driving me insane.

Will had some time before his internship started, so he wandered around campus aimlessly, thinking about Hannibal. He waved hello to people he recognized as part of his cohort, bought a breakfast sandwich from the cafe, and explored more of the psych department.

As Will meandered down a hallway, redirecting his path toward the clinic, he noticed a bulletin board with a few flyers posted to it. He never really paid attention to anything that was happening outside his personal sphere which encompassed mostly going to school and hanging out with Hannibal—

Ugh, Hannibal…

—but now that his relationship with his best friend appeared to be rocky at the moment, Will decided to see what was happening on campus during the summer. Maybe he could find something to distract himself from the shit that started with proposing to be Hannibal's fuck buddy.

Will approached the bulletin and, almost immediately, spotted a flyer for a mentoring program helping kids from trouble homes.

Attn: Psychology Graduate Students

Consider applying for the Summer Mentoring Program here at Columbia!

The program will match you up youth in need of guidance.

This program could be used as a credit toward graduation.

Interested applicants please contact xxxx@col.edu

*The summer credit seems appealing...*Will lost himself in thought as he stared at the program announcement. The mentoring program could be a nice distraction from his troubles with Hannibal.

Wait...I'll have to be sociable...but I need more distractions... Will cursed to himself as the realization sunk in. However, spending less time at home with Hannibal, occupied with his internship, and now possibly this mentoring program, sounded like his only option to regain his sanity and possibly reassess his relationship with his best friend.

Fuck it...I'll do this thing…

As soon as Will found his desk at the clinic, he emailed the mentoring office his resume. By the second half of his shift, the coordinator for the mentoring program had emailed him back, asking if he were either free that afternoon or later in the week to meet the director.

Will hopped at the chance to stay as far away as possible from his apartment and agreed to come to the office that afternoon. Will thought about sending Hannibal a quick text to let him know that he was going to be late getting home, but ultimately decided against it.

I really don't feel like talking to him…besides, do I have to tell him everything?

Will couldn't believe how rapid his relationship with Hannibal had deteriorated after proposing to be fuck buddies. He and Hannibal had their issues in the past (i.e. not speaking to each other for a whole year, getting into fights out in public because of x,y, and x...etc.), but this particular "tiff" felt different. It was probably due to the fact that Will basically admitted out loud, in so many words, that he was sexual attracted to his best friend, but didn't want to commit.

I'm acting like Hannibal now...but he's the one who would be a terrible boyfriend…

Will struggled finishing the last hour of his shift. His thoughts were consumed with Hannibal; constantly catching himself gawking at his phone from time to time to see if his friend sent him a message or tried calling him.

I guess he's also ignoring me...

Later that day...

Will arrived to the mentoring program office a few minutes before his meeting with the director. He had spent the free time in between the end of his shift and the meeting eating a quick early dinner at one of the food plazas near campus.

He was fidgeting in his chair in the waiting room, still looking down at his phone, subconsciously hoping to get a message from Hannibal about not being home yet. He sighed when he saw no new messages before shoving his phone into his backpack.

Will felt his heart race a little. *Why am I so nervous?* He bounced his leg up and down, waiting impatiently.

"Will Graham?" The woman at the front desk was standing up, peering over to look directly at him.

"You can go into the director's office."

Will nodded his head as he walked into the office on the other side of the desk. As he opened the door, a woman greeted him with a kind smile.

"Nice to meet you, Will." She motioned for him to sit down across from her at her desk.

Will muttered back the same salutation, anxious that he would blow this interview.

"So, I took the liberty to talk to some of your professors...they all said great things about you…" The director took out some papers and shuffled them around. She stopped at a page with a photo of a young girl on it.

"We're understaffed here, but it's nice getting qualified applicants." She ended, still smiling, looking up at Will.

Will nodded back. He almost blushed from the compliment. "T-thank you…"

"I have one little girl here whose father was emotionally abusive...I think with your experience coupled with your current training, the two of you will make a good pair."

Will nodded again. *Didn't think I would be matched up this quickly.*

The director shuffled through the papers once more before handing them over to Will. He cautiously took the files and peered at the name of his possible new mentee.

Abigail Hobbs…

"First, you'll meet Abigail here at the center for a few visits in order for us to assess your interactions with her. Most of your time together will be spent here until she's comfortable enough with you." The director continued describing the position as Will looked through Abigail's file.

This doesn't seem too difficult…

“After, it is important that you establish a relationship with her where you can advise her about educational and social skills. Sort of like a big brother/little sister dynamic.”

“Okay, great. When can I meet her?” Will asked, eager for the opportunity; an opportunity that could shed some light in his life outside of the drama with Hannibal.

I don’t have to tell Hannibal about this...this is my job and my own life…

“She’s here today, if you have some time to meet for a quick introduction.”

Part Forty - One

Chapter Notes

Sorry for being a huge giant hiatus flake, you guys. Hope you enjoy this chapter :)

---lady_slice

P.S. Thanks to the person who gave the 500th kudo! I'm sure you're an amazing person :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She's here? Right now?

"Wait...really?" Will had to stop himself from jerking sideways in his chair; he had no idea the mentoring would start today.

Okay, now I'm more nervous than I was before. Will managed to sit himself up right; preventing a most certainly embarrassing situation that would have ended with him on the floor due to shock.

"Yes, the kids visit the rec center on campus during the summer semester. It's easier for our student mentors if their mentees are close to campus."

The director chuckled a little from Will's reaction, but she was lighthearted about it. Will eased up a bit when he realized that he was making the situation a bigger deal than it really needed to be, relaxing finally.

I can do this...like I said already...this shouldn't be too difficult...

But as soon as he felt his body give way to a sense of calmness and serenity, it immediately tensed up again from rapid vibrations pulsating from his phone; it was still in his backpack which was leaning up against his leg.

I bet that's Hannibal…I don't care still...but I bet that's him...

"It'll only be a quick hello, just to put a name to a face. Afterwards, we'll set up an official meeting and then a home visit."

The director stood up from her desk to walk across the office toward the door.

Will let his phone go unanswered. His mind was reeling; having to deal with both Hannibal and a new responsibility made him anxious again.

Home visit?...fuck...I didn't think about that being a possibility...

Will had wanted to keep Hannibal separate from his mentorship, that was one of the main reasons why he had decided to accept the position. There was no way he would be able to juggle mentoring someone a lot younger than himself while dealing with whatever the fuck was going on with his best friend.

What do you think about being friends with benefits?

Will groaned to himself in his head as soon as his proposal popped up, yet again.

I still can't believe I said that…

Maybe he won't be around that often? He seemed offended by the idea...so maybe he'll avoid coming home…?

Will groaned again. The possibility of not seeing his best friend regularly conflicted with confronting Hannibal about being fuck buddies. He couldn't understand why their relationship had worsened to this point; a point at which Will couldn't decide whether it was better to not be close to his best friend or to ignore him completely.

Would I have to move out? But I really don't know anyone else here...also...I can't lose Hannibal...ugh this is so frustrating...

"Will? Are you coming along?" The whole entire time Will had been wrestling with his thoughts about Hannibal, the director had been waiting for him by the door, albeit patiently. She was a very resolute and calm person (just thought I throw that in there :p).

"Oh yeah sure…" Will got up from his chair when he finally saw that the director was motioning for him to follow her.

"Don't worry, the home visit won't be for a while." She added as if she could read Will's mind.

Will looked at her and chuckled. He put his free hand behind his head and rubbed his neck.

I must look ridiculous. I need to chill.

"Oh, yeah...I was going to ask you to elaborate on that...I actually have a…roommate…" Will started out the sentence normally, but then hesitated, rather painfully, over the word "roommate", as if he couldn't remember that Hannibal was his best friend or the guy he just asked to be fuck buddies with.

"That's not a problem, unless your roommate has a criminal record." The director half joked, trying to lighten the mood of this increasingly awkward situation she had found herself in with a somewhat anxious, yet highly recommended, graduate student.

"Ha, yeah...I don't think so…" Will stumbled, as if to suggest he didn't know whether his "roommate" had a history of criminality.

Yet, the director, being the cool and collected person that she was, diffused the situation once again as she led Will down the hallway to the door leading to the outside. They crossed the patio, under a covered loggia until they reached the rec center where the kids from the program hung out during the summer.

“We’ll just have someone come over with Abigail when the two of you are free, it’ll only be a couple of hours. After that, oh and if you pass our evaluation for the rest of the program, you can meet with Abigail on a more regular schedule.”

Will followed the director from behind, nodding his head at everything she was describing to him, half listening, half thinking about Hannibal.

“My roommate likes to cook, so that would be fun, I suppose.” Will meant to say to himself. He didn’t know why he had said it; maybe he was on autopilot from all these years of bragging about his best friend’s culinary passion even when they were on the outs.

But I wish he didn’t have to be there...this visit is going to be so awkward...I can already feel it…

“...umm...there’s no way to just have the visit between myself and the staffer and Abigail?” Will sheepishly asked, hoping, no, praying for another option.

Once they reached the building, the director motioned for Will to walk in first. He looked around and saw a bunch of kids shouting and playing in the space.

“I’m afraid not. We need to meet everyone that may come into constant contact with one of our kids.” The director answered Will as she motioned again for him to follow her across the room. Will noticed, on the opposite side of the room, a girl sitting by herself. She looked a little lonely.

Is that her? Why does she look so sad? Will thought to himself, suddenly feeling sorry, yet empathetic for Abigail. He knew what it was like to be an outsider.

Abigail was sitting on a chair, swinging her legs back and forth. The director walked up to her as Will stopped short as if not to disturb his new mentee. He watched the director crouch down in front of Abigail, patiently coaxing her to come over and meet her new mentor.

Will gulped. He was so nervous.

I really hope I don’t screw this up…

The director managed to get Abigail to hop of her chair and walk over to where Will was standing. Abigail walked ahead of her a bit, looking up at Will as she approached.

“Hi, my name is Will. Will Graham.” Will held his hand out for Abigail to shake, but she only hesitated, looking him up and down with caution.

The director crouched down next to Abigail again, and softly whispered that Will was a nice person. Will waited for Abigail to look back at him, which he greeted with a smile; Abigail

finally returned the kind gesture. They stared at each other for another minute, both not entirely sure what to do next.

“Why don’t the two of you talk for a while? You have some time still, right Will?” The director asked as she straightened into a standing position. Abigail looked at her before looking back at Will. Will did the same.

“I’ll be over there, if you two need me.” The director smiled at them both before walking across the room to break up an impending fight between two rowdy little boys.

Abigail, without further hesitation, walked back over to her chair. Will followed her. He grabbed one of the colorfully patterned chairs the staffers at the center kept to brighten up the space and placed the chair next to his mentee. Abigail resumed swinging her feet back and forth while Will just sat in silence.

Okay, now what?

“You look nervous…” Abigail started after a minute or two of lingering silence, giving Will major side eye as she continued to swing her feet about. Will had noticed that she was staring at him as he sat down next to her.

He chuckled. In fact, he was a little nervous still, and a little annoyed that Hannibal had to be included in on his wanted distraction from their drama.

“I think that’s just my personality.” He finally offered.

Shit, maybe I am a little anxious looking. Why doesn’t anyone ever tell me that?

Abigail crossed her arms and huffed. “I’m only doing this because my mom wanted me to…”

Ah, maybe I can get her to relax some more…then maybe I’ll calm down... Will took this moment as an opportunity to ease the palpable tension between himself and Abigail.

“So, you live with your mom?” Will asked as casually as possible as he turned his chair at an angle so he could look at Abigail, but not encroach into her personal space.

Abigail shrugged as she rolled her eyes while crossing her arms. “I wish I did. I live with my grandparents...my mom lives…by herself…she really can’t take care of me right now…”

Abigail’s head began to hang low; the topic was obviously painful. However, Will took the hint. He could talk to her more about her family once they got to get to know each other better.

“I’m glad you decided to, you seem like a decent enough kid.” Will joked. The move finally made Abigail giggle a little.

Okay, great, maybe I can do this.

“What do you like to do? Do you have any hobbies? For our next visit, I could bring you something for us to do…” Will noticed that he was coming off overly eager again as he

finished his sentence, however, Abigail was still smiling.

He seems awkward and goofy, but really nice. Maybe this isn't so bad. Abigail thought to herself, letting her guard down.

She sat back into her chair as she thought about what she liked to do. "I like reading…" She murmured.

Will beamed, he just so happened to have the books he used to read when he was Abigail's age. She seemed like a bright kid and would probably enjoy them.

"I have a few books from when I was your age. I can bring them for our next visit if you want."

Abigail nodded slowly. "Okay…thank you…"

The conversation died a little as both Abigail and Will searched for the right words to say next. Will spoke up first, regrettably bringing up Hannibal again.

"...I guess you're coming over to my apartment one of these nights...you'll get to meet my roommate…" Will started, not really sure why he had brought the visit up...or Hannibal...

Abigail, not aware of the drama, of course, perked up. "Oh! That sounds like fun...maybe I can see your book collection…"

Will smiled. Abigail's awkwardness matched his own which somehow comforted him. It was nice to know that she was just as cautious about this whole mentoring thing as he was.

Will's phone buzzed again. *Shit…ugh, is it Hannibal???*

He nearly jumped out of his chair. Convinced that his roommate was desperately trying to reach him, Will was so annoyed with how many times Hannibal was blowing up his phone, yet subconsciously intrigued that he had Hannibal so shook by him not answering.

"Is it your roommate, Mr. Graham?" Abigail asked meekly, almost having to avoid getting bumped by Will as he catapulted himself to a standing position.

However, it was Will's mother, asking him to call her later since he hadn't call her the night before last, you know when he and Hannibal fucked on their kitchen floor.

Shit, I forgot I was supposed to call her...

...wait, Mr. Graham?

"No, it's my mom—also you don't have to call me 'Mr. Graham'…" Will turned to looked down at Abigail, "you can call me Will." He smiled kindly at her.

"Okay...I like 'Will'." Abigail added, swinging her legs again as she watched Will fumble with his phone.

Will's phone vibrated again; this time it was Hannibal. This last message was the latest in a series of messages he had been sending to his younger friend since the meeting with the director, wondering when he was going to be home that evening.

Ugh, I really don't feel like seeing him tonight, but where else would I go?

Will sighed heavily as he typed out a message to Hannibal, telling him that he was running a little late because of a meeting. Abigail noticed how bothered her new mentor seemed.

"Are you okay? Do you have to leave already?" Will looked down at Abigail as he peeled his eyes away from his phone. She seemed a little sad at the possibility of him leaving soon.

"I'm fine...it's just my...roommate…" Will hesitated again as he referred to Hannibal as his roommate. Of course, technically Hannibal was his roommate, but he was also his best friend and....um... future fuck buddy.

Will looked across the room for the director. She acknowledged him before walking back over.

"Did you two have a nice chat?" The director asked once she approached Abigail and Will.

"Yeah, it was nice." Will replied, gathering his personal items.

"So, we'll see you next week." The director added as Will's body language suggested that he was ready to depart.

Abigail got up from the chair before hugging her body up against the director, as if she were still too shy to talk to Will.

"Bye, Will!" She shouted back at him before hiding behind the director.

Will chuckled and waved back. "Bye, Abigail. I'll see you next week." He practically jogged out of the center, realizing that he was a minute away from missing the next train.

"Did you have a nice visit, Abigail?" The director asked as soon as Will was out of earshot.

"Yeah...he seems really nice." Abigail answered with a big grin.

A few days later...

Ever since the meeting Abigail, Will and Hannibal had been actively avoiding each the last few days. Thankfully, that day after Will got home from the rec center, Hannibal had already retired to his room for the evening. Will had been glad he didn't have to see Hannibal, but he also had to figure out a dinner for himself, which sucked a lot.

Why did he even message me if he were just going to go to bed early?

That night Will had decided to heat up leftovers from a meal prepared by Hannibal a few nights prior and ate silently in his bedroom thinking about the visit with Abigail. She seemed like a really nice and bright kid, so the mentoring thing would be easy, right?

What do you think about being friends with benefits?

FUCK!

As soon as the question appeared in his head again, disturbing his otherwise peaceful thoughts, Will dove underneath his comforter and covered his face with a pillow.

This is fucking ridiculous…

It was now later in the week, the day before a second meeting with Abigail, and he had barely said more than a handful of words to his best friend. Will wasn't sure how to tell Hannibal about the mentoring program without bringing up the friends with benefits thing; he had been on campus all day but couldn't avoid going home any longer. The ride home had been excruciating.

I can't confront him...

Once home, Will took his time approaching the front door to the apartment. He was aware of Hannibal's usual schedule, but he knew, depending on the number of cases the hospital received during the day, Hannibal would either arrive home earlier or later than what was typical.

Hopefully he's still at the hospital...god I hope he's still at the hospital...

As soon as Will opened the door, he saw Hannibal standing in their kitchen, rummaging through the cabinets above the counter.

Fuck.

Will slowly closed the door behind him and sighed. *I can't keep avoiding him…*

He thought to himself that it was probably best to just go into the kitchen and make nice with his best friend. The home visit with Abigail was coming up soon.

Once he reached the kitchen threshold, Will stood silently, waiting for Hannibal to turn around and acknowledge his presence, but he didn't. Will knew Hannibal knew he was there; his friend could hear a mouse run across the floor in the next room (that was an exaggeration of course, but Hannibal did have great hearing).

"So...how was your day…?" Will asked, surprisingly with patience, after standing quietly for a while, his arms crossed tightly against his chest.

Hannibal turned around but didn't appear shocked by the sudden presence of his friend.

I knew he knew I was here... Will thought to himself, sighing mentally.

Before answering Will, Hannibal grabbed a mug off the counter, sat down at the kitchen table, and took a sip from his tea. They both stared at each other, as if the two were mortal enemies; the atmosphere was incredibly bizarre.

...ugh, this is fucking strange...

Hannibal took another sip out of his tea mug, letting the question linger in the air longer than it really needed to.

“Exhausting. How about yourself?” He finally answered, without skipping a beat.

How can he be so calm about all of this? It’s freaking me out.

Will cleared his throat before he replied.

“Fine…” He hesitated before joining Hannibal at the table; feeling as if he needed to get permission from his friend in order to do so. Hannibal’s energy was confusing the hell out of him.

Will stood his ground and kept his arms crossed. “...so, I joined a mentoring program…”

Hannibal paused before taking another sip. He looked up from his mug quizzingly, as if he were wondering why his friend were taking so long to join him at the table, but still being very standoffish about the whole ordeal.

“That explains why you’ve been so busy…” Hannibal commented as a matter of fact.

Will wanted to roll his eyes but stopped before doing so. *Stop being so weird, Hannibal.*

“Yeah, I figured it would be a great way to earn credits over the summer…” Will shuffled on his feet, “the kid they paired me up with doesn’t *seem* terrible.” He tried to steer the conversation toward a lighthearted direction, but the attempt fell flat with his best friend.

Hannibal gently placed his mug down on the table, breaking eye contact only a little to watch where his mug landed.

“...I’m supposed to have a home visit in the near future...wanted to make sure that was okay with you, of course…” Will almost stammered. Hannibal’s behavior continued to throw him off.

“We should have your mentee over for dinner.” Hannibal offered, still insanely calm.

Wow. Really?

“Wow...really?” Will ended up saying out loud; he had to uncross his arms to steady himself.

“Of course. Why would I hamper your academic career? Let me know when you schedule the visit and I’ll work around my schedule at the hospital.”

Hannibal got up from the table to place his mug in the sink. Will watched his friend moved slightly before averting his eyes.

This still feels really weird…

“I’m going to bed now, I have to wake up earlier than usual…” Hannibal said as if they had plans that night.

Will nodded his head quickly. He felt horrible for assuming that Hannibal would be a jerk about the mentoring program because...of his proposition...

...ugh…fuck...

“Thanks for being cool about this, Hannibal…” Will practically whispered as if he were referring to casually fucking instead of the mentoring program visit.

Hannibal only nodded back at Will before brushing past his friend to exit the kitchen

“Goodnight, Will.” Hannibal said as he briskly left, the scent from his long exhausting day mixed with what he usually smelled like, which was nice, lingering next to Will.

“Night, Hannibal…” Will responded, mostly speaking to his friend’s back, who had already made it halfway down the hallway.

Will sighed before leaning up against the wall. He dreaded furthering the awkwardness, so he waited before he heard Hannibal close his bedroom door to walk to his own.

What do you think about being friends with benefits?

I’m so sorry, Hannibal...

Chapter End Notes

I'm back and I'm fully inspired to finish this epic. :) This story was kind of like a part time job for a while, but I'm determined to continue.

Like my stories? Leave me a tip or comment (I appreciate both :D)

Part Forty - Two

Chapter Notes

> Hope this chapter makes up for being on hiatus for more than a month. Happy Thanksgiving to my American friends and I love you all.
>
> --lady_slice

The following week…

And you guessed it; the week after the moment in the kitchen was... tense ….to say the least. Will and Hannibal, as you also probably predicted, continued to avoid the other until the fated home visit arrived the following week. The two (ex-?) best friends had barely spoken a word, mostly filling silence with brief mentionings of what to serve and when the two of them would be home to prep for dinner, mutterings, and such and such (because they can't figure out how to communicate properly like adults).

Despite the apprehension, Will couldn't believe how calm and helpful Hannibal was being with this home visit; his best friend had been mindful of their dinner guests' diets (considering that one was a child) and kept Will up to date with the preparations. All Will had to do was just show up and not act nervous.

However, on the day of the dinner, Will was extremely nervous. He had barely spoken to Hannibal that entire day; Hannibal had arrived home early from the hospital to put the final touches on dinner and Will had been in charge of straightening up the apartment whilst setting up the nice fold out dining table with leaves, a gift from Hannibal's parents as a move-in present for the boys (oh wow...they sound like a newlywed couple).

As soon as Will finished setting up the dining table, he headed toward his bedroom to change, stopping briefly by the kitchen to glance at Hannibal...just to see what he was up to...however, Hannibal wasn't there...

I guess he went to change already? Will thought to himself becoming increasingly wary of the prospect of running into conflict with his best friend later in the evening in front of Abigail.

Will tried shrugging it off; he would remain calm. Maybe Hannibal was avoiding him all day because he too wanted to prevent any future tension?

It was strange; they had avoided substantive conversations and Hannibal had been curt whenever Will tried to talk to him about the dinner. However, last night, while helping

Hannibal with a dish, Will had a freak out moment and Hannibal took the effort to comfort his friend.

I'm going to ruin this... Will had said in a fit of frustration, trying to de-stem some parsley as garnish per Hannibal's instructions.

You'll be great, just be yourself. Was all Hannibal had offered before going back to his uncomfortably cold demeanor.

The comment had shocked Will, of course; they had been weird with each other ever since he asked Hannibal to be his fuck buddy. The moment was oddly comforting yet jarring. Will had only nodded, mumbling a quick "I guess you're right…" before continuing his task.

Will stood in his bedroom, staring at the outfit he had picked out for himself the night before. It was something Hannibal had suggested he wear once or twice before; something he hated at first, but it had grown on him after wearing it the second occasion, when he had accompanied Hannibal to a party the Chief Resident at Mount Sinai hosted a few months ago.

It's really not so terrible of an outfit... He smiled a little as he thought about Hannibal picking out his clothes for him over the years.

After getting dressed, Will exited his bedroom to head toward the kitchen. A little curious as to why his best friend was taking longer than usual to get dressed, he made a quick stop next to Hannibal's bedroom door. He wasn't sure if he should knock or just shout. He hesitated as he formed a fist with his hand to rapt lightly on his friend's door.

"Hey...Hannibal?" Will's voice cracked as soon as the words left his mouth.

He didn't hear an answer, well he thought so anyway. He was only replied to by the sound of the handle turning and the door slowing opening to reveal a nicely dressed (delightfully scented) Hannibal. Will blushed as he backed away from the door, half trying to hide his embarrassment.

"Abigail...and the staffer should be here...any minute." Will mumbled as he tried to back up just enough without colliding into the wall.

Fuck, he looks really nice. Will thought, turning his head to the side, his cheeks warming up with a strange tingling sensation.

"Great. I'll set the table." Hannibal responded, almost ignoring Will's presence (and crippling anxiety), walking into the kitchen to grab the dishes.

Will, not really thinking, but wanting to keep the tension to a minimum, followed his best friend into the kitchen.

"Do you need some help? I can—"

"Why don't you uncover the first course," Hannibal said with slight authority in voice as he intercepted Will picking up a plate before the latter could finish his sentence, "the table will

be ready by the time they're here if I set up." He concluded his statement as he walked out of the kitchen.

Will gawked at his friend's back. *Are we really fucking doing this right now?*

"Fine." Was all he could manage. Will gathered himself as he walked over toward the counter where the plated serving dishes were tucked away.

Okay, stay calm. Hannibal is just being a drama queen right now. If I play nice, maybe he'll follow along and not blow this for me…!

Will took a deep breath. He waited for Hannibal to carry the rest of the dish sets out into the living room before uncovering the food. As he took another breath, there was a knock at the door.

Oh my god! They're here! Will's attempt at being calm quickly evaporated. He dashed into the living room, just in time to see Hannibal opening the door for the program staffer and Abigail.

Abigail appeared first at the door. As soon as she spotted Will, she jumped up with a quick wave and loud playful greeting.

"Hi Will!" She shouted cheerfully.

Will smiled as he walked up to the door. Hannibal was standing nearby introducing himself to the staffer. Will crouched down to one knee to greet Abigail.

"Hi Abigail. How was the train ride?" He said with a huge smile on his face, masking his nervousness.

"It was fun! Next time you should go with me." Abigail offered. Everyone laughed at some degree at how cute Abigail was being.

Will straightened up and looked over at Hannibal, who was patiently waiting for his best friend to introduce him to his mentee.

Will cleared his throat. Now he definitely wished Hannibal didn't have to be involved. "Abigail, this is my roommate, Hannibal." He motioned slightly toward Hannibal, barely enough to acknowledge him, but just enough to not make a scene.

Hannibal smile as he crouched down to greet Abigail as Will had done, but he was taller than Will and almost certainly taller than Abigail. Yet it didn't prevent him from looking at her directly in the eye.

"Hi Abigail, my name is Hannibal. It's a pleasure to meet you." He held out his hand for her to take.

Abigail blushed a little as she barely shook Hannibal's hand. "Nice to meet you, Hannibal!" She giggled as Hannibal straightened up while smile down at her.

Will couldn't help but beam at the interaction; he forgot how sweet his friend could be. The moment was soured, however, when Hannibal looked over at Will with a demanding look.

"Will, do you mind finishing up in the kitchen? We wouldn't want the food to get cold." He said with the same condescending tone as before.

Okay, wow. Really, Hannibal? Will crossed his arms to stop himself from grimacing. "Yeah, right. I totally forgot I was doing that."

Will marched into the kitchen, huffing to himself as he listened to Hannibal charm the staffer and make Abigail giggle some more.

Fuck you, Hannibal. I can't believe him right now. Will stopped. Before dropping a bowl full of salad greens, he steadied himself up against counter, closed his eyes, and sighed deeply.

I'm not going to let Hannibal ruin this.

Resigned to thinking that his relationship with his (erstwhile?) best friend was officially over, Will calmed himself by inhaling deeply and holding his head up. He wasn't about to let Hannibal shake his resolve.

The rest of the dinner preceded exactly how you probably thought. Hannibal and Will managed to keep their weird feud subtle, but it mostly helped that the staffer was more concerned about how Abigail was acting in the environment than the way her future mentee and his ~~boyfriend~~ best friend were acting toward each other.

Hannibal would criticize the way Will was holding his utensils, following up with some embarrassing story from their childhood. Everyone laughed at the stories, except for Will, who sat seething in his chair.

Will couldn't stand it any longer; he knew his emotions were getting the better of him and he knew that that could possibly ruin his chances with this mentoring program.

What the fuck, Hannibal? Stop criticizing everything I'm doing!

As soon as the dinner was over, Will couldn't wait to get the staffer alone and away from Hannibal. Hopefully he could gauge how the night went if he could get the staffer to himself and in a controlled setting.

"It was nice having the both of you over." Will guided the staffer toward the front door as Hannibal helped Abigail with her plate.

Before answering, the staffer paused, turning slightly so that Abigail was out of earshot.

"We don't normally do this ahead of time before filing our reports, however, I'm sure you'll be accepted as Abigail's mentor." She stuck her hand out for Will to shake, which elicited a cute grin from Will, having been relieved that his petty bullshit with his best friend didn't ruin his chances with this program.

Will grabbed the staffer's hand firmly and shook it back. "Wow, that's great!"

“It was a pleasure to meet you, Will, and your roommate. I think you’ll be a good influence on Abigail.”

“Bye, Will!” Will felt a slight pull on his leg from behind. Abigail was tugging on his jeans and beaming up at him. As he wiggled himself away, turning around with a smile on his face, Will crouched down to say goodbye.

“Bye, Abigail.” At least the worst thing that could happen didn’t. He helped her put her coat on and wished both her and the staffer another goodbye.

The relief soon dissipated as Will closed the door. He now directed all of his frustration toward ~~the love of his life~~ (one-time?) best friend.

Hannibal was in the kitchen, banging the pots and the plates as he washed. Will clenched his fists and stomped into the kitchen. He was so over Hannibal’s bullshit.

I’m so over his bullshit.

“Hannibal! What the fuck was that?!” Will screamed. He didn’t mean to scream; the tension building up over the past week and Hannibal’s behavior at dinner pushed him over the edge.

Was it really that terrible that I brought up being fuck buddies?!

“You’re being *such* a huge asshole!” Will lost control over his emotions.

Hannibal turned around steadily instead of verbally responding. He crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow. The expression angered Will even more.

“I can’t fucking believe you…” Will crossed his arms in a huff. He had to turn his face away to keep Hannibal from seeing how red he was.

“You have no clue.” Was all he heard from his friend. Will blinked before turning to face Hannibal.

What?

Of course, Hannibal was referring to Will’s proposal. He had realized earlier in the week that he couldn’t be patient with his friend’s indecisiveness. After finding out about Will’s mentoring program, Hannibal had been inwardly excited for his friend, yet because of the weirdness between them, he couldn’t embrace him. The distance feeling was too much and he could no longer wait for Will to make the next move.

“...look Hannibal...I know what this is about…” Will started, stammering as he tried to hold himself together.

Hannibal was also struggling to remain calm, but he was, of course, better at holding his resolve than his younger friend. He told himself, again, that he needed to accept whatever Will wanted. He couldn’t afford to push him away again.

"...I'm sorry I suggested we should fuck around...I'm really sorry...I didn't mean to offend you…but *please* don't treat me like a little kid! You know I hate it when you do that..." Will sniffed a little; it surprised him that he was getting so upset.

"...I don't want to ruin our friendship…" Will wanted to say more, but he couldn't find the right thing to say without accompanying the statement with a deluge of tears.

There was another pause before Hannibal spoke up. "I apologize for treating you that way. Please forgive me…" He sighed.

"I miss you."

Will sniffed again before looking up at Hannibal. He gulped; hadn't expected this response. He felt his anger slowly melt away.

Hannibal smiled a little; he knew he just needed to let his friend come to him. He told himself, again, that he'll accept whatever relationship Will wanted with him. He was tired of the back and forth.

I miss him too...

"...I miss you too, Hannibal…" Will returned, smiling back as he took a step closer toward his friend.

He had expected a fight, but now he couldn't pull himself away from Hannibal. Hannibal stood in place, letting Will approach him. Will stepped closer, his heart beating fast. He missed the times when they were sweet to one another; it had felt like an eternity.

Without thinking, Will ended up an inch away from Hannibal, who remained quite still.

This might be a bad idea, but I don't care. I miss him. Will thought to himself as he reached out a hand to caress Hannibal's face. Hannibal responded by pulling Will closer toward him. They stood still next to each other before Will leaned in to kiss his friend.

He felt Hannibal kiss him back; the swell of anger turned into euphoria which led to Will attacking Hannibal with a flurry of kisses. He reached down to yank Hannibal's shirt off, pushing him hard up against the kitchen sink counter.

"Let's go to bed." Will breathed out through a fleet of kisses. He couldn't control him himself as he felt Hannibal's body everywhere as if this was the first time he had ever touched his friend.

"Which one?" Hannibal smirked as he tried to keep up with Will's intensity. He had never seen his friend like this before.

Will pulled away and grin. He grabbed Hannibal and dragged him into the hallway toward his room. "It doesn't matter."

Hannibal barely had the time to respond before Will threw open the bedroom door and tossed him onto the bed. Hannibal laid on the bed in complete silence, gazing up at Will who was in

the process of taking his clothes off in front of him.

Will grinned again before grabbing a bottle of lube from Hannibal's dresser and jumping on top of him in the bed. In what felt like a second, Hannibal's trousers were off and his cock was getting a massage through his boxers. He moaned as Will yanked the boxers off then moaned even louder as his friend licked him before engulfing him fully.

Hannibal had to prevent himself from bucking upward into Will, who was pinning him down into the bed. There was no time to react reasonably to the situation they had found themselves in; all the tension from the last week and a half turned sexual and it felt like the only outlet to all the frustration.

Will looked up at Hannibal who was too caught up in the sensation to look down at him. He grinned before letting Hannibal's cock fall out of his mouth. Hannibal opened his eyes quickly, whimpering in protest.

Will, still grinning, squirted a glob of lube into his hands before stroking Hannibal. He squirted some more onto his friend before he pulled off his boxers. Hannibal moaned as Will gently lowered himself down onto his hard throbbing cock, slowly bucking forward as his body touched his hips.

Hannibal reached forward to grab Will's body and they, in perfect unison, humped into each other; moaning so loudly, caught up in the feeling of being close again.

Will lurched forward and put his hands on Hannibal's chest. He groaned as he pushed his body downward; the feeling was too great for him to not to cry out.

"Fuck, Hannibal. You feel amazing…" It was a little lame, but the sensation was overpowering.

Hannibal pulled him closer, thrusting upwards with so much force. It was surprising how much Will could take, but he wasn't thinking about that. All Hannibal could think about was the way Will looked as they fucked. He loved that look.

Will continued to ride Hannibal, he could feel himself seizing; his toes curled and his cock twitched as it bounced against Hannibal's body.

"I think I'm going to come…" Will breathed, straightening up to grab a hold of himself, jerking fiercely.

He was stuck between wanting the moment to last and instant sexual gratification. However, he could feel Hannibal's body tense the way it usually does before a release and decided to indulge himself.

Hannibal moaned as he came into Will, signaling Will to let out a cry before coming all over Hannibal. He collapsed down onto his friend and hugged his body tightly.

Oh my god, that was so fucking incredible. Will's thoughts raced. *... maybe we could make this work...*

After a moment or two of silent hugging, Will let Hannibal flipped him underneath his body. He moaned quietly as he felt his best friend slowly push downward into his hips, lightly caressing his face with his lips. Will unexpectedly let out a quiet gasp as Hannibal traced his lips along his chin to the back of his neck, stopping only briefly to leave a kiss behind his ear.

Will began to move his hands along Hannibal's body, preparing to embrace his friend, but before he could do so, Hannibal pulled away suddenly, peering down at Will from not too great a height.

Will playfully squirmed underneath his friend, impatiently waiting for Hannibal to say whatever was on his mind; however, the silence began to deafen Will's other senses as his anxiety heightened with worry.

Or...maybe this was a bad idea after all? He thought to himself, expecting his closest friend in the world to reject being friends with benefits and possibly finally reject him.

"What?" Will said as jokingly as possible, although he could feel his voice crack with worry.

I wish I knew what you were thinking... He thought silently to himself once more.

Will blinked, coughed out a laugh as Hannibal continued to stare at down at him. His facial expression was entirely neutral. Will often had trouble trying to figure out Hannibal's emotions from his body language, but for some reason, this moment was the most difficult yet.

As he blinked, he felt a hand caress his face. He instinctively leaned into the hand as he placed his own on top. Will turned his head a little more so that his lips touched Hannibal's skin.

"I feel like you're going to tell me this was a bad idea…" Will added as softly as possible, brushing his lips up against his friend's hand. He felt Hannibal caress the back of his neck, still totally silent.

The weight of silence almost suffocated the euphoric joy that had once filled the atmosphere while the two friends embraced each other once again. The tense feeling had seemingly disappeared, however, Will feared that this was the last time he would be able to push his friend to his limits with their relationship.

I can't give everything him what he wants...what if I get hurt? Will squeezed his eyes shut, hoping for the best, but, most certainly, expecting the worst. Will was still apprehensive about being in a romantic relationship with Hannibal. He knew his friend wanted it, but he had thought that maybe fooling around from time to time would be enough.

Fuck...I screwed up…

"I'll do it." Will heard Hannibal's quiet voice pierce through his thoughts.

What?

“What?” Will had been sure that he misheard Hannibal. Surely his friend was not okay with just being fuck buddies.

Hannibal, before shifting his body weight to lie down next to Will, caressed his younger friend’s neck once more, holding in a sigh that would have been the culmination of his feelings toward his relationship with his best friend.

“This. If this is what you want, I’ll do it.” Hannibal finally explained, his other hand now caressing Will’s other cheek.

“Are…are you sure, Hannibal?” Will found it difficult to respond; he knew that was a stupid thing to say, yet he wanted to convey that he did care about his friend’s feelings in the end. Deep down, he really did care...

“I wouldn’t say so if I weren’t.” Hannibal offered. He managed to not express his growing impatience with his best friend’s back and forth with their relationship. If he could only have part of Will, he would take that over not being with the person he loved at all.

Will scooted his body up in the bed so that his upper half was leaning against the headboard. Hannibal’s hand was now on his waist, but he didn’t move it. He let his friend caress his body.

“Are you fine with the rules?” Will asked as confidently as possible. The way Hannibal was acting coupled with the way his friend looked at him was a little unnerving.

If arrangement doesn’t backfire in our faces, maybe...Hannibal...maybe the two of us could date? Will struggled with the possibility. He had been telling himself, ever since he found out about Abel Gideon, that Hannibal wasn’t capable of committing to one person.

“We only sleep with each other unless we’re serious about someone else. Then we discontinue the arrangement.” Hannibal almost perfectly repeated Will’s proposal from that fateful morning, although adding more flare to the second half and conveniently leaving out “it’s that simple.” Because, let’s face it, it really wasn’t.

Will bit his bottom lip. “So...does that mean you’re fine with...everything?” He still needed verbal confirmation from his best friend. All he could think about was being with Hannibal.

Hannibal paused before looping his arm around Will’s body, pulling him downward into the bed. Will let his friend hug him against his chest as if Hannibal were afraid of losing him again.

“When do you become so particular?” Hannibal playfully replied instead of answering Will’s question. He buried his nose into his best friend’s hair.

Will sort of chuckled; the atmosphere still felt tense and he wasn’t sure how to proceed. *Maybe I need to take it easy and chill...he seems fine with it…*

He pushed himself away with an elbow nudge into Hannibal’s chest, whipping himself around to face his best friend directly.

“Come on, really, Hannibal. Are you okay with this?” Will smiled a little as he leaned in to kiss him. He stopped short to hear his older friend’s answer.

Hannibal rolled his eyes, but leaned in also for the kiss, saying, “yes, stop being so pushy.”

Will felt Hannibal smile as they kissed, both lingering a little while after, both using their limbs to pull each closer to the other. Will knew Hannibal was attempting to change the tone of the conversation, but it also felt strained.

Our relationship can survive this…it has to... Will thought to himself, accidently losing himself in the kiss with Hannibal. He felt Hannibal pull away, stroking his chin in the process.

“We should get some sleep.” Hannibal whispered, implying that Will was welcomed to share his bed.

Will nodded as Hannibal slid out of the sheets to wash up. He watched Hannibal get out of the bed and head toward the bathroom.

He closed his eyes, thinking about the way his best friend had felt pressed up against his body not too long ago.

Part Forty - Three

Chapter Notes

> Fun fact: I wrote this entire chapter while stuck in the Las Vegas airport because they cancelled my flight home. Yah for Hannigram occupying my time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

About a month later...

It had been a month since Will officially started mentoring Abigail. All three of them (yes, this includes Hannibal) had been getting along famously. Almost.. almost like a family, a little unconventional because the two "dads" in the family can't communicate properly about their feelings. Despite this, the three of them loved spending time together.

Will and Abigail were inseparable; besides their regular meetings at the rec center on campus, they went on a couple of fishing trips and Abigail came over to their apartment once or twice for dinner. Hannibal happily obliged taking off early, whenever he could, to have dinner with his best friend (or ummmm…not quite sure how to refer to their relationship…"fuck buddy" sounds too crass...albeit true…), and his mentee. Hannibal thought they were cute together; he enjoyed watching them interact with each other.

Also, everything seemed to be going well between Will and Hannibal (what?); that is, they managed to prolong the inevitable outburst of emotions that will almost certainly put an end to their little arrangement.

Anyway, this coming weekend would be a test for not only Will's relationship with Hannibal, but also whether he was capable of entertaining a ten year old for a couple of days. Yep, that's right, Abigail was planning to stay the entire weekend with Will and Hannibal. They had plans to go fishing early in the morning on Saturday, and since Will's progress reports were always excellent, the social worker assigned to Abigail ok'd her staying over for the weekend.

Will had been thrilled when he heard the news, but as the weekend approached, he could feel himself becoming anxious again...he was always nervous, yet this feeling was ten times worse. This was the biggest test, and if he fucked this up, then...well, no outside connections with a huge blemish on his record, he would get absolutely no credit during the summer, and…

"I won't get to see Abigail!...I've surprisingly grown attached to her." Will paced nervously in the kitchen, wringing his hands into a tight ball.

The first part of his sentence had been said in outburst, but then he managed to calm himself down a little as he thought about how someone as young as Abigail enjoyed hanging out with

someone like him. He was never sure about kids but spending the last month with Hannibal and Abigail changed his mind.

Ha...I wonder what it would be like if Hannibal and I had kids together ... Will smirked, before he suddenly realized that he was thinking romantically about his best friend... again.

Once in a while, sometimes after sex, sharing a meal and/or both (like who are we kidding? Will and Hannibal spend every waking hour together), Will would think cutesy fluffy things about Hannibal, forgetting that he apparently believed that his friend wasn't capable of commitment, even though, we know he is...well with Will anyway.

Ugh, I really need to cut that shit out... Will stopped pacing for a brief moment before he thought about the weekend again, starting up his nervous marching.

Hannibal watched Will pace with agitation in his voice. He was perched against one of counters with his arms crossed and a slight smile glued to his face. He knew Will was nervous, but couldn't help but think how cute he looked when he was. It reminded Hannibal, again, of all the times Will would call him when he had first moved to New York for med school, anxious about school or dating.

"They wouldn't let you take Abigail for the entire weekend if they didn't think you were capable of taking care of her." He said patiently, still managing to hide his grin from his friend.

Will only gave Hannibal a curt nervous laugh with the tilt of the head before continuing his stride.

His anxiety had carried over from last night. Luckily, Hannibal came home early, comforting Will with dinner and a *very* satisfying blow job before going to bed (Will had said so, so it's not Hannibal inflating his own ego.)

Will huffed. "...well then, they really don't know me…" He had stopped finally in the middle of the kitchen, but he was facing away from Hannibal.

I'm going to drive myself insane obsessing over this!

"I'm going to screw up this weekend..." He said mostly to himself, but it was still loud enough for Hannibal to hear even with his back facing him.

Hannibal sighed as he pushed himself away from the kitchen counter. He walked over to where Will was still standing, his arms crossed and facing downward. Hannibal reached out slowly with one hand to touch Will's back.

"...I think you're being too hard on yourself…" Hannibal whispered as he traced along Will's back with a few fingers before the movement become a massage.

Hannibal took his time rubbing his friend's back before scooting in closer to kiss Will's neck. Will shuddered slightly as he felt Hannibal's lips up against his skin. He let Hannibal pull

him in a bit closer, moaning a little as the kisses grew warmer and began to migrate all over his shoulder.

"...Hannibal...I'm serious...I don't think—" Hannibal spun Will around, leaning in for a kiss. Will accepted it before finishing his statement, squeezing Hannibal with both arms "...I can do this…" he absentmindedly concluded as he gently pulled away, still holding onto Hannibal.

Hannibal smiled down at him before letting go. He turned away toward the hallway and grinned. "I truly do believe you'll do fine, Will." He winked at Will before disappearing down the hallway.

Will was left standing in the kitchen, mesmerized by the way Hannibal had drawn him in with just a simple kiss.

Hannibal had to leave the kitchen quickly; lately the arrangement with Will had blurred their relationship and he had trouble trying to figure out where his best friend's head was at. A month ago, when they consummated this strange deal, Hannibal had been cold to Will on purpose the entire night during dinner with Abigail and the staffer.

He was trying to give Will the benefit of the doubt, but his feelings were too strong. He had to control himself; he had never been this hung up over someone.

Despite, Hannibal's initial worry, the whole fuck buddies thing seemed to be working out just fine... too fine, actually. It bothered him.

Hannibal sat down on his bed. He had wanted to embrace Will longer, but he knew that would probably lead to sex and they only had an hour before Abigail arrived.

Also, Hannibal, during this past month, only followed his younger friend's lead. Only engaging with Will if Will seemed interested or initiated. He was still too terrified to push his best friend away.

...so basically, everything wasn't fine, especially on Hannibal's end anyway...

Hannibal stretched out on his bed and stared up at the ceiling. He thought about the first time he had admitted out loud that he had a crush on Will, which, as you'll remember, was with his frenemy Frederick over a bottle of red wine.

Hannibal sighed. Last night, he had sex with Will in his bed after fooling around a bit in the living room. They were watching a movie after dinner and instead of finishing it, Hannibal went down on Will. Will and Hannibal had sex almost every night the past month, but Hannibal dwelled on the recent memory.

He closed his eyes as he thought about the way Will looked at him, the way his hair felt in between his fingers, and the way he moaned with every thrust.

God, Hannibal...you're so sexy...

But before Hannibal's thoughts could go any further, he heard loud pounding on the door. He straightened up, trying to look presentable, but before he could, his bedroom door flew open with a very much exasperated Will huffing in the door frame.

"Wil—" Will cut off Hannibal with a yelp.

"She's coming early! We haven't even started making dinner!" He nearly shouted. He marched into Hannibal's room, pacing back and forth again, fully unaware that barely a second ago his best friend was thinking about the way he looked and sound while they fucked.

Hannibal followed Will with his eyes and sighed. "We'll make dinner with her when she gets here, relax. She might even have fun." He said as a matter of fact and slight wave of his hand, grin on his face.

Will spun around. He wasn't having it. "*Not* everyone can be as calm as you, Hannibal."

"Will, you really need to stop. You're doing great with Abigail. She loves coming over here." Hannibal sighed once more, still lingering on the bed watching Will.

"Are you sure?" Will asked meekly. He knew he was being ridiculous, but he couldn't figure out how to relax.

Will stood in the middle of the bedroom with his arms crossed, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet. Hannibal continued to stare at him, his thoughts running with images of Will from last night.

"Come here." Hannibal softly commanded after another bout of silence. He would only try anything if Will seemed up to it, of course.

Will perked up a bit, yet still too wrapped up in his own head games.

"Hannibal…really...I'm a wreck right now…" Will said slowly, barely flinching.

Hannibal held out his hand with a slight head tilt and a smile. Will uncrossed his arms as he rolled his eyes. He crept up to Hannibal and took a hold of his hand.

Will tried to stop himself from smiling; Hannibal was smiling at him the entire time he waited for him to come to the bed.

Fuck, he's so sexy. The thought raced over and over in Will's mind. He too began to think about fucking last night...too bad they didn't have much time...

Hannibal waited patiently, in this moment and in general. He had to keep telling himself that he couldn't afford to drive his friend away by being too eager, but the outstretched hand move seemed to work.

Will stopped, he managed to wedge himself in between Hannibal's legs. He was still holding onto his friend's hand, lightly caressing it.

Fuck, he's so sexy... Will kept thinking to himself. He crouched down a bit to place both hands on Hannibal's shoulders. Hannibal responded by grabbing a hold of his waist. Will rocked himself forward, forcing Hannibal to lie down on the bed. Will laid down on top of him and slowly reached down for a kiss and Hannibal kissed him back.

A minute or so later, the two were all over each other in the bed, furiously kissing the other, hands rediscovering familiar parts of the other's body. Will pushed his body down into Hannibal's, who thrust upwards into Will. Will pushed himself up with both hands before grinding down into Hannibal's crotch.

Fuck…

Will let out a moan the same time his phone rang.

"Fuck! She's here!" Will toppled over Hannibal, landing with a loud thud on the floor next to the bed. He scrambled to pick himself up, fixing his shirt as he tried fiddling with his hair in the mirror.

"Fuck, I look like a mess!" Will was trying to adjust his pants so that his semi-erection was not noticeable.

Fuck!

Will felt Hannibal pat him on the shoulder. "While you're in here straightening up, I'll answer the door." He smirked playfully before exiting the bedroom.

Will looked at himself as soon as Hannibal left. *How the fuck is he so calm all the time?!*

"Hi, Hannibal!!" Will could hear Abigail as soon as the door to their apartment opened. He took one more good look at himself before exiting to the hallway.

I can do this...I have Hannibal so it's not going to be so terrible...fuck...I'm glad I'm fucking a culinary master…

Will stopped before heading out the door. Immediately he realized that he hadn't thought about Hannibal as his best friend, but rather someone he was fucking.

…ugh...fuck...well...that is the truth…

Will tossed his hair around some more. He grinned, thinking about grinding on top of Hannibal just a second prior.

About an hour later...

“Abigail, you have to hold still. Hannibal won’t be able to hold you while you stir the sauce.” Will was supervising as Hannibal held Abigail up over a huge pot of spaghetti sauce. She was cheerfully stirring, laughing loudly because the way Hannibal was holding her was also tickling her.

Hannibal chuckled. “I got her, Will. Relax.”

Abigail giggled some more which caused the wooden spoon she was holding to fling out of her hand and almost whip Will in the face with hot red sauce. Will dodged the spoon just in time, but a glob of sauce landed in his hair.

Both Hannibal and Abigail laughed at the sight. Will could only grin back as he tried to wipe the sauce off his face.

“Here, Will.” Hannibal gently placed Abigail down on the floor before grabbing a towel hanging on a rack.

He walked up to Will, motioning to his friend if he would like some help. Will sighed and nodded as he let Hannibal wipe the sauce goop out of his hair. The moment felt a bit sexually charged as Hannibal gently caressed Will’s forehead as he cleaned his friend.

“...Thanks, Hannibal.” Will murmured, attempting to hide how red his face had gotten from Hannibal simply brushing his forehead.

“I’m going to the bathroom!” Abigail declared as she dashed out of the kitchen before anyone could stop her.

Will and Hannibal watched her leave before returning to their current position, but by this time Hannibal had a hand around Will’s waist and Will stayed still.

“Oops...there’s still more in your hair…” Hannibal whispered as he finished running his fingers through his friend’s hair.

Will shuddered. He wrapped an arm around Hannibal’s waist, pulling him closer. It was nice seeing Hannibal interact with Abigail; he had no idea his best friend was so great with kids...which caused Will’s imagination to run a little. He began to fantasize what it would be like if the three of them were a family…

Will closed his eyes and accepted a kiss from Hannibal as he thought about his best friend and Abigail giggling with each other.

“I’m back!” was all that broke the moment. Abigail had marched back into the kitchen, reaching for the wooden spoon in the sink as Will broke away from Hannibal quickly.

Fuck...did she see us?

“Hannibal! Can I stir some more?”

Hannibal chuckled, nodding. He helped Abigail up to the pot again while Will watched them perched up against the kitchen counter. Suddenly, his nervousness evaporated as he enjoyed

witnessing Hannibal and Abigail bonding.

Later that night...

“I hope she’s okay in my room.” Will slid underneath the sheets, squirming as the warmth inundated his body.

Will and Hannibal had decided that Abigail would sleep in Will’s room and Will would sleep in Hannibal’s. Every night, Will and Hannibal had been sharing a bed, so it wasn’t too out of the ordinary for them to do so that night.

“She’s fine. And we’re one door down.” Hannibal chuckled at Will’s worries, even though he thought it was adorable. He was in the process of changing into his pajama bottoms over by his dresser.

Hannibal heard Will sigh then turn over in the bed. “You know you’re cute, when you’re worried.” He said has he got into the bed with Will.

Will turned over to face Hannibal. He waited for his friend to get comfortable before reaching out to caress his face.

“Thank you for helping me with Abigail…” Will murmured, scooting his body closer to Hannibal’s. His hand sliding past his ear, running through his hair.

“Of course.” Hannibal whispered back, inching closer to Will, his movement ending in a kiss.

Will breathed in deeply as he embraced Hannibal. He pulled his friend closer to his body, as close as possible, feeling all over.

Hannibal slid a hand along Will’s neck, using the action to prop himself up higher in the bed. Will moaned a little as Hannibal pushed downward into him, sliding his body on top. Hannibal held onto Will’s neck as he thrust downward into his body, using the other hand to feel along Will’s side.

“Ah...ah...Hannibal…” Will breathed, groaning as Hannibal felt his body.

Hannibal grabbed Will’s leg, pushing it away from his body to allowing himself to push down into Will more directly. Will looped his arms around Hannibal’s waist, humping upward into his body. The light kisses turned passionate as the two tore into each other.

Hannibal reached down, feeling Will through his pajama bottoms. Will whimpered as Hannibal freed him by pulling the bottoms and his boxers down. Will moaned a little louder as he felt Hannibal’s naked hard cock up against his, thrusting upward into his best friend even harder.

“Fuck…” Will murmured. Hannibal had a hand wrapped around both of their cocks, rubbing up and down while still holding onto Will’s neck, sending kisses all over his skin.

Will couldn’t help himself; he bucked upward into Hannibal so hard that Hannibal had to hold onto him even tighter.

After a while in this position, Hannibal slowly straightened up. He peered down at Will before leaning downward to engulf his friend’s cock with his mouth. Will let out a deep sigh as he felt Hannibal suck him in; his body squirmed as Hannibal held onto him, licking up and down his skin.

Will reached down and ran his hands through Hannibal’s hair, gently pushing his head down further into his crotch. He could feel his body tense; it seemed to tense early than it usually did before an orgasm.

Will, without thinking, pulled down Hannibal’s head even further, but his friend didn’t gag. Hannibal only stroked Will back with his hand as he sucked even harder on his cock. He could feel Will’s body tense as it usually does. The feeling overtook Hannibal.

“Ah...ah...I’m coming, Hannibal!” Will nearly shouted, forgetting to give his friend a heads up before he came. Yet, Hannibal managed to catch it all while also holding Will down as he squirmed underneath him.

“...fuck…” Will muttered, “that felt so good.” He had his eyes closed, gasping for air. He felt a hand place itself on his chest and he opened his eyes. Hannibal was kneeling on top of him, stroking himself.

Will smirked; he pulled Hannibal down on top of him. Hannibal grunted as he humped vigorously downward into Will, holding onto his legs again.

Will grabbed Hannibal’s neck and humped back. He could feel himself getting hard again from just feeling Hannibal’s hard cock up against his body.

He felt Hannibal’s body tense, which was followed by Hannibal coming all over Will’s cock and his chest. He collapsed down next to Will, giving himself a moment before reaching for a tissue on the nightstand. Hannibal handed the tissue to Will, who accepted it gleefully.

Will wiped himself down before nudging himself underneath his best friend’s arm, laying his head on his friend’s chest.

They embraced each other before falling asleep, as Will thought about Hannibal and Abigail making sauce together and giggling at each other’s jokes.

Chapter End Notes

You guys have no idea how much your comments make my day when I submit updates to this story.

--lady_slice

Part Forty - Four

Chapter Notes

Happy new year!
--lady_slice

The next morning...

The following morning, Hannibal woke up a little earlier than usual to make lunches for both Will and Abigail for their fishing trip. Neither one was awake yet; Abigail had passed out from bouncing around with excitement all night and Will had passed out from being anxious most of the day and a little in the evening, finally relaxing as he spent time with Hannibal and Abigail later in the night. Also...fooling around with his best friend before going to bed proved to be a great stress reliever.

The night couldn't have been any more lovely; Hannibal had enjoyed himself with Abigail and Will, more so than he had thought he ever would. Being with the two of them felt right...if only his best friend wouldn't push him away so often.

Thank you for helping me with Abigail…

He's incredibly stubborn...but I keep indulging it... Hannibal was lying in his bed, arms crossed behind his head, staring up at the ceiling with a peaceful sounding Will lying on top of his chest, breathing lightly. Hannibal unfolded his arms as he reached downward to run his fingers through his best friend's hair.

He's adorable when he's like this. Hannibal thought to himself, twirling his fingers through Will's dark strands. The slight movement prompted a sleep noise from Will, who then fell back into a deep slumber almost immediately after letting out a quant sigh. Hannibal smiled as he thought about the way his best friend felt in his arms as he was grinding his body up against his. He would never get over the feeling of being so close...

I could lie in bed with him until he wakes up, but I should probably prepare their lunches before it gets late...

Before making his way to the kitchen, Hannibal managed to get out of his bed without disturbing Will; it helped that Will was completely dead to the world and would probably wake up just in time to throw some clothes on right before departure.

Maybe he wouldn't mind if I took him along to my conference in Chicago. Hannibal thought to himself as he sauntered through the archway into the kitchen. The Chief Resident at Mount

Sinai couldn't attend a medical conference coming up next month. He had asked Hannibal to go in his place and deliver his talk.

After some contemplation, Hannibal decided it might be a great opportunity to get more alone time with Will, even though they spent most of their time together anyway. Maybe the "alone" time might change Will's perspective on their relationship? Hannibal certainly hoped so.

I'll propose the idea when he comes home later...

Hannibal walked over to the kitchen counter and proceeded to prepare Abigail and Will's lunches, blissfully losing himself in his memories from last night. He had been dabbling with gourmet sandwiches and thought he would try a few dishes on his best friend and the new addition to their "family".

"Hey. You're up already?"

Hannibal barely caught the sleep laden inquiry belonging to Will. He looked over his shoulder only a little to see a shadowy figure filtering through the dim lighting coming through the hallway into the kitchen. Will was wearing his PJ bottoms (Hannibal's PJ bottoms to be clear) and no shirt, standing in the entrance way to the kitchen.

"Yes, I wanted to make sure your lunches were ready before you left." Hannibal grinned. He could detect Will's body from the dimness, but the image floated away as Will disappeared to hug him from behind.

"Thanks. You didn't have to do that..." Will whispered as he squeezed Hannibal close against his body. Hannibal lingered before responding; he could feel his body reacting quickly and had to prevent himself from taking Will right there in the kitchen.

"I don't mind. You know that." He finally answered, relishing in being so close to his best friend. Feelings from last night resurfaced; he wanted to stay in the position with Will for as long as possible, fearing that he would lose him forever if they let go of each other.

"...I should throw some clothes on before Abigail wakes up." Will muttered in a groggy voice, unaware of Hannibal's passing thoughts.

Hannibal felt Will let go of his body, listening to his friend's footsteps as he exited the kitchen. He exhaled as he smiled to himself. The moment was intimate and warm...if only Will wasn't so headstrong.

But I can wait for him. Hannibal hummed his way through *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* as he whisked himself around the kitchen in a flurry to finish packing the lunches.

A few hours later...

After tossing the fishing equipment into the car, a feat that was made even more difficult as he tried to contain Abigail's jovial enthusiasm, Will managed to get on the road in time to travel upstate to Iron Pond before the sun rose. He hadn't been there yet and figured it would be a great place to avoid areas that are usually crowded around this time of year.

Have a nice time. Hannibal had wished to Will and Abigail, as he leaned on the outside of the car into the driver's window to peer inside.

Will had been blushing the entire time Hannibal had been standing outside of his window, which only lasted a minute. *Thanks...Hannibal.* He had said back meekly, fighting the urge to get out of the car and kiss his best friend goodbye.

Bye, Hannibal! Abigail had shouted back, her excitement for the day's trip returning with every little bounce in the passenger seat.

Oh, I need to speak with you when you get back today. Hannibal had added before Will turned on the car to take off.

Oh? Well, then I can't wait. Was all he had offered, attempting to sound cool, yet really awkward at the same time since Abigail was sitting next to him, still bouncing in her seat.

I wonder what he wanted to talk about…?

After a long five-hour car ride with Abigail trying to sing along to every song on the radio (Initially, Will thought it was cute, but it got a little old after a while), they arrived at Iron Pond.

"Okay, we're here!" Will exclaimed. He parked the car a few feet away from the shoreline before taking his time turning the engine off. Abigail jumped out of the car with a quick "catch me if you can!" but Will caught her gently before she could go any further.

"Abigail! Wait a sec. Let me grab our gear." He chuckled, as he held onto her tenderly by the arm. She laughed back, squirming in the seat to wiggle herself away.

Will only smiled; Abigail was being super cute. "Come help me get the stuff from the back of the car."

"Okay!" And with that Abigail jumped out of the car and ran to the trunk. She bounced up and down as she waited for Will to catch up with her.

"Come on, Will!" She shouted with glee.

"I'm coming!" Will tittered back.

Will unpacked the car before leading Abigail to a spot that was covered and further down along the shore. They walked for a bit, just enjoying each other's company, before Abigail, in all her young innocent ten-year-old life, decided to make the walk a little uncomfortable.

"Will, is Hannibal your boyfriend?" She asked pointedly after a few moments of silence. She was walking a bit behind Will, kicking away branches and picking rocks to toss.

Will stopped and dramatically rubbernecked back at Abigail. He tried to keep moving, but the question stunned him more than he expected. He wasn't sure how to handle something so obviously awkward and questionably complicated as an inquiry into his relationship with Hannibal.

Fuck, did she see us last night? He shook his head violently before answering. "Um, no, he's not my boyfriend, "he's just my best friend." He ran a hand through his hair to steady himself. That's the truth… is what he told himself anyway…

"Oh, I mean...I only asked because you live together…" Abigail tried to explain. She could tell that the question greatly bothered (understatement) her mentor, but of course she didn't understand why.

"Two people can live together and not be in a relationship, Abigail." Will said playfully, walking further ahead a bit as if he were trying to physically escape Abigail's interrogation.

"That's true...but you also hug each other… a lot…" She said timidly, "...last night...when I came back from the bathroom...I thought I...I saw Hannibal kissing...you…"

She paused. Will noticed that he was more ahead of her than he had anticipated. He stopped walking and turned around. He spotted Abigail waiting patiently on the trail, afraid that she had said something wrong.

"...but I wasn't spying, I promise! I was leaving the bathroom...I don't think you guys heard me come into the kitchen…" She was looking downward at her feet and rocked back and forth.

Ugh, fuck...she did see us...

Will had thought for a split-second last night that Abigail might had seen them kissing in the kitchen when she returned from the bathroom, but had forgotten about the incident when he was screwing around with Hannibal before bed.

He sighed. "No, nothing like that happened…" He tried to explain...or lie really. *How do I explain this to a kid?...wait I don't have to tell her anything….she's just a kid!*

"Listen, Abigail," Will dropped down to one knee and glanced up at her, "Hannibal is a really good friend of mine and...well…"

I can't believe I'm actually about to confide in a child...

"...we're trying to figure somethings out...but we are best friends...that's the truth…" Will straightened up as he smiled down at Abigail, albeit with a slight cringe.

Oh my god, please buy that...

Abigail slowly nodded. However, she looked puzzled as if the explanation for only being "really" good friends wasn't sufficient enough to describe her mentor's relationship with his best friend.

He felt his face redden as he realized that he was being honest about his relationship with Hannibal publicly. He wanted to run away, but he was frozen in place, thinking about the way Hannibal looked last night.

God, he's so sexy... Will sighed to himself. He turned his head in the opposite direction of the path in order to prevent Abigail from seeing him blush.

"I care about him...a lot. Hopefully things work out..." He concluded, afraid to face Abigail directly again. He hoped that was enough to quench her curiosity.

Will witnessed, out of the corner of his eye, Abigail nodding silently again. He sighed a sigh of relief, assuming that was the end of that.

Okay, that wasn't too painful.

They walked in total silence for a little while longer; Abigail trailed a bit behind still.

"...but if two people love each other, couldn't they make things work?" She asked innocently after a moment or two.

Will froze. He steadily turned to face Abigail. She was genuinely curious with her question, again, not fully aware of the weight of history behind such a question.

"...I guess so..." Was all Will could manage. He felt Abigail grab his hand, as if to soothe his anxiety.

"Good! I like spending time with you and Hannibal! You're my new family!" She tugged on him to get him to walk faster. She seemed happy that the conversation didn't end with the possibility of her newfound family breaking up before they barely had a year together.

Will tried to smile, but he was still stuck on Abigail's weighty question, seemingly too wise for her own age.

...but if two people love each other, couldn't they make things work?

Could we make things work?

Later that day…

After fishing at Iron Pond for most of the day, Will drove Abigail back to her grandparents' house before heading home.

Oh, I need to speak with you when you get back today.

Will doubled over as he suddenly remembered that Hannibal wanted to talk to him when he got home.

Fuck...I hope he doesn't want to talk about our relationship…

Will slumped in the driver's seat. He moped as another thought popped into his head.

What if he met someone and wants to end our thing?? Will almost had to pull the car over.

Yeah, it was his idea in the first place to suggest being friends with benefits and yeah, he was the one who came up with the rules. BUT he didn't expect Hannibal to start going out with someone so quickly. He hadn't broken up with Donald too long ago...

Ugh, but you know how he is, Will...he's always with someone... Will tricked himself into believing, yet again, that Hannibal was quick to not commit.

Why did I ever think this friends with benefits thing was ever going to work out?

Will, after struggling to find parking near their apartment, took his time opening the door. He thought about making up a lie about needing to be on campus for a school project, instead of being home tonight, you know, so he could prolong whatever horrible thing Hannibal had to say to him.

Fuck...I guess I'll just have to endure it…

Will slowly turned the key to open the door to their apartment.

Fuck...what if he is getting back with Donald?? He nearly freaked out before pushing the door open, but before he could freak out fully, the door to the apartment swung open. Hannibal was standing in the entryway, smiling at Will.

"Hi, you're back earlier than I expect—" Before Hannibal could get a word out, Will brushed past him into the living room.

"Okay, Hannibal. Tell me what it is. Just tell me *now*, please." Will demanded, folding his arms across his chest. He knew he looked ridiculous in the moment, as if he caught his boyfriend in a lie and begged for the truth.

Hannibal, without reacting to Will's nagging demeanor, only grinned before strolling up to Will. Will, realizing that Hannibal was up to something, back away an inch. They kept up like this until Hannibal had Will pinned up against the wall.

Fuck, he's too close... Will kept staring at Hannibal, waiting for him to finally make a move.

Hannibal gently grab Will's hand and stroked it with his thumb. "Would you care to spend a few days with me in Chicago?"

Will gulped. He hadn't expected Hannibal to suggest flying somewhere, just the two of them.

uh...what…?

He let Hannibal hold his hand a little longer before he moved in closer for a kiss.

"...sure…" Will whispered, forgetting that he was upset just a moment before, accepting the kiss wholeheartedly.

Not so surprisingly, the kiss was unfortunately interrupted with Hannibal's phone buzzing in his pocket. Will was so close to Hannibal that he could feel the phone vibrating up against his body.

Hannibal pulled away to see who was calling him, then he let out a huge, exasperated sigh.

"Who is it?" Will's curiosity had peaked; he couldn't think of anyone who would get on Hannibal's nerves as much as a trivial phone call, unless—

"Fuck it's Frederick, isn't it?" Will huffed and stormed out of the living room as Hannibal slightly nodded before answering the call.

"What does he fucking want??" Will shouted from the hallway. He couldn't believe a sexy moment with Hannibal had been interrupted by his sworn enemy.

However, Will couldn't be bothered to hear Hannibal's answer before marching into his bedroom. He couldn't believe that Hannibal was still tolerating Frederick after all he had done to undermine their relationship.

He jumped onto his bed, lying flat on his back and stared up at the ceiling.

At least with this Chicago trip, we'll be able to get away…

Part Forty - Five

Chapter Summary

> Omg, you guys, please don't hate me with this chapter. It's the foundation for further super angst...which will only get worse from here on out...but I love you! :p

Monday...

Although he was still exhausted from his weekend with Hannibal and Abigail, Will still managed to get up early enough to get to campus a few minutes before his first class. While on the train, fighting back a yawning fit, all Will could think about was going to Chicago with Hannibal in a few weeks.

Are you sure you want me to go? Will had asked the night before while he ate dinner with his best friend.

I mean, I won't be distracting, will I? I know how distracting I can be… (Will, Hannibal finds you very distracting..)

Ha, no it's better that you're going. Hannibal had been amused by Will's attempt at being cute and coy with the whole trip thing.

Y*ou're my muse, despite what you may think. I would love having you there with me…*

It would be a nice change of scenery...and we would have more alone time... Will smiled to himself as he thought about sharing a hotel room with Hannibal for a few days. For some reason, even though we already know they spend every waking hour with each other practically, the idea of going away with Hannibal for a few days sounded...dare I say it?

Romantic…?

Fuck! Will screamed in his head as soon as he realized what he was imagining. *A romantic trip with Hannibal??*

We're just friends...we're just friends... He repeated to himself.

Will, huddled up in a tight ball in his seat, beginning to frighten the other passengers on the train as his mantra filtered out of his head into a verbal cadence that surely disrupted a smartly dressed businesswoman who just wanted to read the latest international news in peace.

"We're just friends...friends with benefits...fuck…my...life!" Will muttered aloud.

So absorbed within his thoughts, Will nearly missed his stop. He told himself that this trip to Chicago would be no different from all the other times he spent hanging out with Hannibal. If they just kept to the rules, everything between them would be just fine.

If we just keep to the rules, we'll be fine...

I care about him...a lot. Hopefully things work out…

...but if two people love each other, couldn't they make things work?

Do I love Hannibal? I mean...I care about him...I don't love him...not that way anyway...I don't think...ugh fuck...I don't know what I'm thinking…

Will's thoughts rambled on and on; he was so caught up in his own head space that he wasn't paying attention as he walked briskly across the campus.

"Hey!" Will heard a soft voice accompanied with a loud "thump!"

"Oh wow! Sorry I wasn't paying attention!" Will threw himself on the ground in an effort to help retrieve the items of the person he just rammed into.

Oh god, I'm such a space case. "I'm really sorry!" Will picked up a purse whose contents rolled out along the pavement. He sheepishly handed the purse back to a fellow student he had met once or twice before but couldn't remember her name.

"Ha, it's okay. Accidents happen...you're Will Graham, right?" Will looked up as he handed the purse over.

"Uh, yeah...er…um…" Will struggled to remember the girl's name. *Allison? No, Alice? La-...Ala—*

"I'm Alana. We met before at student orientation." Alana stuck out both hands to accept her purse and simultaneously shake Will's hand.

Alana Bloom...right...I remember meeting her before… "Right. Sorry, I didn't see you." Will rubbed the back of his head as he laughed nervously. He felt so awkward.

Alana Bloom was getting a masters in both psychology and clinical medicine. She was a social butterfly who knew everyone on campus, yet she hadn't had the chance to talk to Will. He seemed like a nice and shy person: his personality intrigued her.

"Ha, it's okay. You seem like you're in a rush." Alana picked up her bag as she smiled back at Will. Will blushed; he was having a difficult time trying to not to sound like an idiot around Alana and forgetting her name didn't help.

Ugh, she probably thinks I'm a loser…

"...just caught up in my thoughts…" Will shrugged, but he could feel his heart thumping a little. The feeling was similar to another moment in his life, but he couldn't quite place the sensation...or the memory...(he's misremembering the first time he and Hannibal kissed…)

“You seem like a very thoughtful person.” Alana paused; she could tell that Will was feeling socially anxious.

“I’m glad we had to the chance to talk again! Hope to see you around soon?” She reached out her hand again for Will to take. He nodded back meekly as he accepted the handshake.

“Yeah, I’ll probably see you in class…” Will looked down at his feet. His anxiety was overpowering his ability to conduct himself properly during a simple conversation.

“Great! See you around, Will!” Alana smiled again before walking off past him. Will followed her with a slight turn of his head, watching her walk off in the distance. She then turned around and waved one more time.

Eck! Wave back you idiot! Will forced himself to wave back, cringing a little as he smiled.

Ugh...what the hell is wrong with me? As Will stood dumbfounded in the middle in the path, he suddenly remembered that he was late for class. Picking up speed, he headed in the direction of his core class for the week.

Fuck, what was the whole point of getting up early??

The next day...

When will this nightmare end…? Will was barely hanging on in class. He had a few minutes left in his least favorite class with a professor he liked even less.

I need a nap... Will slumped down in his seat as his professor finished up explaining the details for next week’s exam. A tiny vibration emanating his pocket alerted him to the time. Hannibal was texting him.

Hannibal: Hey :) are we still having dinner tonight?

Will smiled. He didn’t know why he was grinning; they usually ate dinner together…

But why do I feel so silly right now? Will typed out a response.

Will: Duh? We always have dinner together :p

Hannibal: Great. Looking forward to it :)

Looking forward to it? What’s so different? We had dinner together last night…

Will: Haha, you’re not planning on proposing to me are you—

Will stopped himself before sending the message. *Why the fuck would I say that?*

“Hey, Will!” The exclamation shocked Will; it nearly caused him to drop his phone on the ground after juggling around with it for a second or two.

Will scooted himself away from the desk to get a better look at the person calling for him. It was Alana, a revelation that also revealed that they were the only people still left in the room.

What? Where did everyone go? Will hurriedly looked around the room before realizing that he hadn’t replied to Hannibal.

“I didn’t know you were also in this class. Do you always sit in the very back?” Alana chuckled which caused Will’s cheeks to redden.

“Um...haha…yeah...I usually come in a little late.” He answered, turning his head away a bit to avoid Alana’s direct piercing gaze.

“We should sit together next time!” Alana offered, seemingly unaware of Will’s uncomfortable change in demeanor.

“Uh yeah sure…” Will started to pack his things away. He never had anyone (besides Hannibal) so interested in him. It felt a little jarring and he wasn’t sure how to deal with it.

“A group of us is getting together to talk about this exam. Would you like to join us? We’re meeting this weekend.”

Alana was still smiling, and Will was trying to force himself to return it but was still too startled that someone like Alana was reaching out to him.

“Uh...sure…” He jolted a little as he remembered he was supposed to spend part of the weekend with Hannibal and Abigail, “which day? I have to do some stuff for my mentoring program...”

“How about Sunday?” Alana was still beaming, attempting to be as accommodating for her potential new friend as possible.

I think Abigail is coming over Friday night and staying until Saturday, so that should be fine.

“That’s fine...”

“Great! Let me have your number so I can text you the details.” Will awkwardly nodded his head as he repeated his number back to Alana. She blissfully typed the number into her phone.

“Okay, see you on Sunday!” She turned out around after waving goodbye. Will sat glued to his chair as he watched her leave. He then looked at his phone and sighed before typing out a message to Hannibal.

Will: I should be home in a few hours...see you then...

That night...

“I think it would be a shame if it ended up cancelled, don’t you agree?” Hannibal was speaking to Will as he carried dinner plates into the living room. The two best friends were planning to watch their favorite tv show, *The Hunt*, which was premiering its third season.

Hannibal waited before sitting down next to Will, who was on his phone. Since preparing dinner, Hannibal had noticed that something else had captured his friend’s attention. Will appeared unaware of Hannibal standing in front of him waiting to be acknowledged.

“Will?” Hannibal attempted in a soft voice, yet inwardly annoyed that he was being ignored after cooking a meal for his best friend.

“Uh, yeah? Sorry.” Will put his phone down on the armrest closest to him as he accepted a plate from Hannibal.

“Were you saying something?”

Hannibal grinned, with a hint of aggravation, before handing the plate over to Will. He sat down next to him before answering.

“I was saying that it would be a shame for them to cancel the show.”

Will nodded vigorously as if he were listening the entire time. “Yes! God, I don’t know what I would do with myself.”

He proceeded to shovel a mound of food into his mouth. “Hannibal...this is so...good… thank...you…” Will happily chomped along as Hannibal turned on the TV.

They sat in silence watching the first episode, like they had done so many times previously. However, barely a few minutes into the show, Will’s phone vibrated with a series of text, which brought him back to fiddling around with the device. After a while, Hannibal decided he couldn’t go the whole episode without knowing what was on Will’s mind.

He seemed distracted yesterday as well...I wonder if something happened on campus… Hannibal pivoted his head slightly to look at Will.

“You seem distracted…” Hannibal continued to stare at his best friend, who continued to fidget around with his phone.

Ugh fuck.

Will shoved his phone underneath the closest pillow on the couch before answering. He felt weird for keeping his newfound friendship with Alana a secret from Hannibal. It wasn’t like he had a crush on her or anything.

I don’t think so anyway…

“Oh no...I just got a message from a classmate about a study group this weekend.” He shoved the phone further down into the couch as if he were trying to force the phone out of the apartment, away from Hannibal’s sight.

Hannibal, still watching Will’s movements out of the corner of his eye, only stayed silent. An incredulous expression covered his face.

“If you need to do work now, we can always spend time together tomorrow evening.” Hannibal offered slowly in an attempt to get the truth out of his friend. He knew Will was hiding something from him.

Will sighed; he was turning this whole situation with Alana and Hannibal into something bigger than it really needed to be (and the worst is yet to come).

“No…no…I’m fine.” He scooted closer toward Hannibal, a move that prompted Hannibal to inch closer toward him.

“I can start studying tomorrow.”

Hannibal turned his head to look directly at Will. Will could tell that his best friend still didn’t quite believe him, but he figured as long as he didn’t make it into a huge thing, maybe Hannibal wouldn’t make a fuss (?).

“Okay...however…” Hannibal leaned over until his face was hovering next to Will’s, “please let me know if you need to cut our ‘date’ short…” He then placed a hand on Will’s cheek and caressed it steadily, “I won’t mind…” Hannibal was so close to him by this point that Will could feel his body reacting.

Date—

Will knew Hannibal was joking around when he referred to their regular dinner hour as a “date”, but for some reason, the word prompted an emotive response he didn’t expect.

“Uh...umm…” Will struggled to find anything intelligent to say as he felt Hannibal rub his thighs.

“Pardon?” Hannibal playfully offered, moving his hand toward Will’s crotch. Will mimed a muted cry as he felt Hannibal’s hand rub his cock slowly through the denim. Will moaned as Hannibal unzipped his jeans, whimpering as his cock tried to free itself through his boxers.

“...fuck...ah…” Sensational warmth engulfed Will’s body as Hannibal took his time.

Hannibal hummed back at Will as he lowered his head nearer toward his friend’s crotch. Will tensed as he felt Hannibal leave quick kisses along his skin.

“...H-Hannibal…” Will wiggled so much underneath Hannibal that he had to be held down a bit tighter,

“Ah!...ha...oh my god…” But it didn’t matter how hard Hannibal held on to him; as soon as Hannibal’s mouth replaced his hand, Will’s mind almost exploded.

The two were squirming so much that they knocked Will's phone of the couch. Will eyes widened in horror as he watched his phone hit the floor with a thud! However, he was pulled back into the moment with a gentle tug and kiss by Hannibal. Will groaned into the kiss, feeling Hannibal rub his cock while they made out.

"Ah...uh...fuck…" Will breathed out as Hannibal went back to sucking on his cock. Hannibal repositioned their bodies on the couch, getting down on both knees in front of Will as he pushed against his friend's chest with one hand, bunching up Will's shirt into his fist.

Will moaned even louder as Hannibal slide his hand down his chest, feeling everywhere possible, ending by wrapping his hand along Will's back side, feeling from behind.

Will pushed into Hannibal's mouth, trying not to gag his friend, but the feeling was too intense not to move against. He could feel his body wanted to release, but he wanted the moment to last longer than possible, hopefully all night if they could fuck around that long (which they were both capable of doing).

"...fuck...Hannibal. You're so sexy…" Will struggled to articulate exactly how great it felt being inside Hannibal's mouth; he felt like he was going to black out.

Hannibal sped up, rubbing Will's cock with his hand and sucking even harder. Will bucked into his mouth, but he didn't stop. He felt his friend grab the back of his head and moan even louder. Hannibal grabbed Will even tighter, he could feel him begging to come.

"Ah...ah...fuck...Hannibal...I'm going to co—" Before Will could finished, he finished inside Hannibal's mouth. The sensation sent Will into a euphoric haze, slumping into the couch with his eyes closed, thinking about Hannibal's lips wrapped around his cock.

After giving himself a second or two to collect himself, Will opened his eyes; he blinked a few times as he watched Hannibal straighten up and smile down at him. Will blushed.

Ugh, fuck...he is so sexy…

"Uh, um. I should clean myself off." Will jumped up from the couch, hurriedly brushing past Hannibal in the process. He strangely felt embarrassed, as if that were the first time he ever fooled around with his best friend.

Ugh, I feel so weird...ugh…but that was so hot...fuck...I've never came that fast before...fuck...

As Will ran into the bathroom down the hallway, Hannibal stood still peering down at Will's phone which had been left alone on the floor. A second later, another text appeared on the screen, and he immediately recognized the contact name as he crouched down to get a better view.

Alana Bloom...hm...this should be interesting...

Part Forty - Six

Chapter Summary

Would you like a dash of Frederick and Alana with your angst? :p

note: I went back and edited some of the past chapters so that the story remained consistent. I forgot about how much jumping around I did with this non-linear narrative :p

--lady_slice

About a week later…

"*I* told you we were overdue for a wine and bitch fest, Hannibal. Emphasis on the 'wine'."

Ugh, why do I tolerate Frederick?

Frederick was standing in Will and Hannibal's kitchen, yapping on and on about not seeing Hannibal recently.

If only our families weren't such good friends...it's taking me everything not to strangle him…

"All you do, Hannibal, is work *and* probably fuck around with Will. That's all you do. Remember when we use to hang out?"

Frederick whined as he took another sip from his glass. He avoided spilling on his nice cashmere sweater as he swung his wine glass around as if he were having a fit.

Hannibal sighed. "We never 'hang out', Frederick. But you're here now, so I guess I must tolerate you."

Frederick chuckled. He leaned up against the counter with his arms artfully crossed against his chest, balancing the stem of his glass in between his thumb and index finger.

"Right, I 'forgot' that we're 'frenemies'. You would probably frame me for murder if you had the chance." He grinned as he took another sip.

That's not such a bad idea, now that you mention it. Hannibal thought to himself as he took a sip from his glass, grinning back at Frederick.

"*Anyway*, have you heard from Donald lately?" Frederick started, hoping to get a rise out of Hannibal.

Hannibal sighed once more. “You know I haven’t spoken with him, Frederick.”

“Well—”

Before Frederick could get another word in, the front door to the apartment slammed shut. The cacophony was followed by an exasperated Will entering the kitchen.

What the fuck is he doing here?? Will screamed in his head as soon as he approached the archway into the kitchen, convinced that Frederick would somehow ruin the solitude he sought for at home. He looked mostly at Hannibal, but saved a steely stare for Frederick.

“Ah, Will! Glad you’re here. You could probably shed some light on this subject.” Frederick laughed before continuing. Will ignored him as he opened up the fridge.

“Like I was saying, I guess Donald is still pretty broken up about you guys not working out.” Frederick let the statement hang in the air as Will froze, his back still facing Hannibal and Frederick.

Really?? Fuck you, Frederick.

“Frederick. It’s been over a year since we dated. I could care less really.” Hannibal answered as calmly as possible. He could feel Will’s hot-tempered energy radiating off his body.

“Hannibal, really? That’s a shame. It sounds like he’s still in love with you.” Frederick smirked as he took his time taking another sip of wine before twirling his glass, “didn’t you guys talk about getting married—”

Of course, before Frederick could finish his painfully obvious lie, Will slammed the fridge door shut and marched out of the kitchen. He was already having a particularly frustrating day and he wasn’t about to listen to Frederick spin lies in effort to agitate him.

Hannibal never told me he was thinking about getting married to Donald...but still…

Both Frederick and Hannibal watched Will leave the kitchen in a huff.

“Well, that was *rude*, don’t you think, Hannibal? I was only having an honest conversation…” Frederick feigned innocence and surprise at the drama he created.

Hannibal rolled his eyes. He wanted to snub Frederick and comfort Will, but he was also a little frustrated with his best friend. Will keeping secrets and acting shocked about his personal life while holding him at an arm’s length was having its inevitable toll on Hannibal’s emotions.

“Aren’t you going to comfort Will? Do you want me to leave so you two can fuck around like always?” Frederick suggested slyly.

Hannibal rolled his eyes. He wasn’t about to let Frederick get the better of him. “Frederick, mind your own business and stop with the whole Donald thing or I’ll be forced to do something drastic.”

Frederick continued his charade of acting surprised by the mess he started. He raised his hands in retreat.

“Okay, okay. Sorry, jeez...everyone is so serious.”

Meanwhile...

Will tried to not slam the door to his bedroom shut; he didn’t want Frederick to think that he had gotten to him with his petty bullshit, so the door only slammed shut a tiny bit …

Will jumped onto his bed, letting out a huge sigh. He laid face down with his feet hanging off the edge, cursing Frederick for being an asshole and Hannibal for still putting up with him.

Ugh, I hate Frederick so much! He’s so desperate…

Will turned over on his side. He laid wrestling with his thoughts. *I really don’t remember Hannibal mentioning anything about wanting to marry Donald. Then again, he manages not to tell me everything…*

Will rolled over back onto his stomach. *Fuck! What if they get back together?*

...no, they wouldn’t…

...but what if they do…?

“FUCK!” Will covered his face with a pillow as he shouted. After lying like this in the bed for a moment longer, he decided he needed to talk to someone to calm down. That person ended up being Alana.

Alana and Will had been hanging out together more often and Hannibal took notice. One of their daily dinners had been interrupted by Will going out to meet up with “a friend” and Hannibal wasn’t too keen on the change. Will, oblivious to Hannibal’s true feelings since his best friend did his best to disguise it, kept seeing Alana. It had come to the point where Will was comfortable texting her out the blue.

He reached into his pocket to retrieve his phone, typing out a quick, yet playful message to his new friend.

Will: I need to laugh, tell me something funny :p

Alana: Why did the poor dog chase his own tail?

Will: I don’t know, why?

Alana: He was trying to make both ends meet :D

Will: Oh wow, that was bad. But I'm only appreciating it because I love dogs :p

Okay, maybe I appreciated it more than I should have...

Alana: Haha, yeah I know. You talked non stop about possibly getting a dog with your roommate someday :p

Will: Yeah...I'll have trouble convincing him tho.. :p

Alana: Why is that? I thought you two were close? :p

Will inhaled deeply. *Ugh if only other people knew how complicated my relationship with Hannibal was...there's no way I would ever tell anyone…and especially not Alana.*

Will: We are, but he doesn't really like dogs :p

Alana: I'm sure you'll be able to charm him into getting one :)

Will thought about it for second. *Maybe?*

Alana: Are you doing okay tho?

Alana: You seemed stressed today during our group meeting

Will rolled his eyes. *Why does everyone think I'm about to unravel…?*

Will: no, I'm fine, haha

Alana: K, but you know you can tell me, right? I'm here for you :)

Will: thanks, Alana, but I'm okay

Jeez…

Alana: Anyway, this is super last minute, but would you like to go with me to a party tomorrow night?

Alana: I kind of know the person who's hosting, but not really.

Alana: I thought it would be awkward if I went by myself, you know?

Will thought about it for a moment. *I mean, that doesn't sound too bad…and I can hang out with Alana. I'm sure she wouldn't ditch me.*

Will: Okay! Why not :p

Alana: Great! I think it might be a resident from Mount Sinai who's hosting the party.

Alana: So it should be nice!

A resident from Mount Sinai? I wonder if Hannibal knows whoever this is. Will stared at his phone. He wasn't sure if he should mention anything to Hannibal.

I'm allowed to have my own friends, fuck it.

Will: Yeah, that should be cool

Back in the kitchen...

"Remember the guy I went out with about a month ago?" Frederick began as he finished his wine, reaching for the bottle for a quick refill.

Hannibal blinked twice at Frederick. Of course, he didn't; they weren't really friends, they just ran in the same circle.

"Of course, I don't." Hannibal responded with cruel honesty. Frederick only laughed, even though it hurt his feelings... just a little ...

"Whatever, Hannibal. Anyway, he's having a party tomorrow night. You should get out of this apartment and go."

That would be nice, especially if Will cancels plans again.

Hannibal sighed. "Why not."

In Will's room...

Alana: Do you want to meet me at my place and go over together?

Alana: We could also meet at your place too!

Fuck that. There was no way he was going to have Alana bump into Hannibal.

I mean...I have nothing to hide...I just don't want them to meet...that's not weird, is it?

Will: Let's just meet at your place :)

Alana: Okay! I'll see you tomorrow night!

Will smiled as he set his phone down on the nightstand next to his bed.

Tomorrow should be fun...

Later that night...

Frederick stayed over much longer than Hannibal had expected; he had to practically force him out of the apartment.

God, I can't stand him.

He was busying himself in the kitchen looking through new recipes on his phone when Will finally emerged from his room. Hannibal could tell he was still upset with Frederick.

"*Jesus*, he's finally gone. Honestly, I don't know how you put up with someone like that, Hannibal." Will walked over toward the nearest counter, perching himself steady.

"Sometimes we must indulge unpleasant situations in life." Hannibal annoyingly reflected, still looking down at his phone.

What? Will completely missed that Hannibal was mostly referring to his best friend's stubbornness at acquiescing to a relationship with him.

"Okay, well anyway, I'm going to a party tomorrow night." All of a sudden, Will's heart thumped loudly; he didn't know why he was nervous to tell Hannibal about this party.

Hannibal slowly looked up from his phone; his expression remained thoughtful. "Oh, well it seems as if we're both busy tomorrow evening."

Will cocked his head to the side. "Do you have to work late tomorrow?"

Hannibal pushed himself away from the counter before sitting down at their breakfast table.

"Frederick invited me to a party as well."

Will couldn't believe Hannibal. Why the fuck is he going to a party without—

I think it might be a resident from Mount Sinai who's hosting the party...

A wave of cognitive insight rushed in. *Fuck...I bet it's this same party Alana invited me too…*

Will laughed it off; it was quite a coincidence. "Ha, I think we might be going to the same party!"

Then he remembered why he had wanted to meet at Alana's place. *Fuck...I think we're going to the same party...*

Hannibal glanced at Will curiously. “What a coincidence indeed…”

Will blushed. *Ugh, I really don’t want to bring up Alana right now.* “I should study a bit before going to bed. I’ll meet in your room later, okay?

Will rushed out of the kitchen before Hannibal could answer.

Hannibal, resolute and composed, waited a few minutes at the breakfast table before retiring to his room for the night.

I wonder what he’s hiding about his relationship with Alana? Hannibal pondered what his best friend could be up to as he sauntered into his bedroom and dressed for bed. He read in his bed for an hour or so, waiting up for Will so they could say goodnight...and or do other things if possible.

Will opened the bedroom door when that hour or so was up, looking more cheerful than he had earlier that evening. He smiled at Hannibal as he took his time approaching the bed, wearing only his pajama bottoms.

“How are your studies?” Hannibal asked as he lifted the covers for Will to get in. He eased toward the middle of the mattress as the weight of Will’s body shifted it a little.

“Oh, uh...fine.” Will almost forgot that he had lied about needing to study before bed. He just needed to get out of the kitchen and regroup before saying something stupid about Alana.

“Hm.” Was all Hannibal gave in a curt manner that was a little aggravating to Will.

Ugh, he knows something’s up. Will needed to act fast: he could either pretend for a moment or two longer like he’s not hiding something or distract Hannibal.

Hannibal, on the other hand, was only waiting for Will to tell him about Alana. He was beginning to bother him that his best friend was keeping her a secret, as if he had feelings for her. He also didn’t want to cause any tension before the trip to Chicago; the trip was meant to be a getaway from all the drama the two had gone through in the past and it wouldn’t help if they had a silly fight about someone neither of them was currently dating.

“You never talked about marrying Donald…” Will let the statement linger. He knew Frederick had only said it to upset him, but he wanted to make sure that his best friend wasn’t keeping a huge secret like that from him. Also, he wanted to divert attention from this upcoming party.

Hannibal chuckled. Will almost laughed in response but then his expression turned serious.

“Hannibal. I’m serious. You know you have a habit of keeping secrets from me…” Will meant to say that playfully, but he really did think that Hannibal had an issue with divulging the whole truth.

Hannibal smirked before shaking his head. “Of course, I didn’t. Frederick’s a prissy know-it-all with only time and money on his hands.” He set the book he was reading on the night table before turning off the light.

Will slumped down in the bed, staring in the direction of his friend, only sort of buying Hannibal's explanation. He knew he should believe him, but Hannibal's relationship with Donald had done a number on his emotions.

"Okay…" Will muttered.

Hannibal sighed. Will felt the mattress shift as a hand gently slid across his face. He felt Hannibal's lips press up against his, a feeling that he had been waiting all day for, but now it felt spoiled by all the Frederick and Donald talk.

"Will, relax…" Hannibal whispered through the kiss, much like he had done the first time they made out.

Will breathed deeply. He knew he needed to relax, especially since he was keeping his own secret away from Hannibal.

But is mine really a secret? I'm not messing around with anyone behind Hannibal's back.

However, deep down, Will knew he was keeping a secret. Part of him felt vindicated for the way Hannibal had treated his past relationships after their relationship turned sexual. He wasn't trying to hurt his friend, but he wanted Hannibal to know what it felt like being in the dark and a little jealous.

Actually, the feeling was a little empowering, albeit a bit unhealthy. But this is what happens when people don't talk about their feelings out in the open, an understatement of Will and Hannibal's relationship.

Will played off his reluctance. "Ha, sorry. I didn't expect you to be so frisky all of a sudden." He answered, letting Hannibal pull him closer toward his body.

Will flipped Hannibal over onto his back and laid on top of him, grinding his hips downward into his friend's crotch, feeling all over as they made out for a while. Will moaned into Hannibal's mouth, gripping the back of his head, and tugging a bit on his hair.

Hannibal felt up along Will's backside, pushing himself upward into his body. Will could feel himself (and Hannibal) getting hard, but he needed to wake up early tomorrow. Also, he wanted to continue abusing the power he currently had over Hannibal's emotions.

Will broke away from Hannibal as he straightened up. He looked down at his friend, grinning.

"Sorry, I have to get up early tomorrow. So do you."

Will leaned downward to kiss Hannibal on the lips once more before turning over on his side. He heard Hannibal mutter "goodnight, Will" has he shifted around on the bed.

Will closed his eyes with the grin still etched on his face.

Ah, so how does it feel, Hannibal?

Part Forty - Seven

Chapter Notes

I watched Call Me By Your Name the other night and it reminded me of this story that I started such a long time ago and then dropped because I had too many personal issues going on. I also didn't realize that people liked this story until I went back to read the comments a while back, but now I have some more motivation to finish it.

As you'll see, the first part of the story I wrote years ago pales in comparison to the writing I'm finishing for the second part, so please forgive any changes in tone and narrative structure; I thought it would be better to write the best that I can to finish this.

I'm going to finish this third volume which consists of flashbacks explaining Hannibal and Will's relationship up until the fallout the weekend Hannibal visits Will until we get to the last volume in which we finally find out what happens to Will after dealing with cheating on Molly.

So just like the title of this story asks, will you always love me if I start a story several years ago and then finally come back to it?
Love,
Lady_Slice

The following evening…

Both Hannibal and Will had been busy for about an hour getting ready for the party. Will, still high on the power he seemingly had over his friend while still curiously keeping his friendship with Alana a secret, barely engaged with Hannibal as he passed him occasionally in the bathroom or the hallway.

“Hey, I think I’ll just meet you at the party. I’m going over to a friend’s place first…” Will stood in the doorway to Hannibal’s room, watching his friend straighten his tie in the mirror above his dresser.

Hannibal turned his head slightly to address Will. “Oh? Who’s your friend?” He grinned.

Will rolled his eyes as he shrugged. “Chill, Hannibal,” he then shoved his hands into his jean pockets, “She’s a classmate who happens to know the person hosting the party.”

Will observed to see that Hannibal had perked up at the mentioning of the pronoun “she”, seemingly intrigued by whomever his friend was, but Will decided to keep him in the dark, remarking to himself how easy it appeared to ruffle Hannibal who always appeared stoic.

“Well,” Hannibal finished straightening out his tie before moving to his hair, now keeping his eyes on the mirror, “I guess I’ll see you there.” He did one last take in the mirror before walking past Will out into the hallway.

“Sure.” Will tried to add but Hannibal had already disappeared in the kitchen. Will scrunched up his face. *Whatever, Hannibal. Like you haven’t done this to me before.*

Will looked back down the hallway at the entrance of the kitchen, prepared to follow his friend, but decided against it; he needed to get on his way to meet Alana.

“Hannibal,” Will passed the kitchen, “I’m leaving now!” He said as he opened the door to their apartment, “I’ll see you there okay!”

“Regrettably, I promised Frederick I would stop by his place a little before the party.” Will heard Hannibal call back. Will rolled his eyes as he grabbed his house keys before taking a step outside the door.

“Hope to see you there before you run off with your ‘friend’.” Hannibal added.

Will paused mid step. He closed the front door before turning in the direction of the kitchen. “Hannibal, I’ll definitely see you at the party, okay? Jeez, you sound a little jealous…” He smirked, but not entirely sure why.

Hannibal poked his head out from the kitchen. “Not jealous, only intrigued by whomever has captured your attention.”

Will shrugged. “I’m sure it’s not that serious. Maybe you should relax once in a while.” He quipped before opening the door again to walk out. He barely waited to hear Hannibal’s response before jogging to the subway stop.

About thirty minutes later, Will arrived at Alana’s apartment early; he had been anxious about getting there on time, and thought he could hang out somewhere nearby before knocking on her door, but Will told himself just to act cool and natural, if that were a possibility considering how anxious he usually felt.

Will knocked on Alana’s door. He waited a few minutes until it opened, revealing Alana wearing a simple, yet nice dress that accentuated her figure. Will stared back at her, not sure if he should say something about the dress without sounding like a total creep.

“Uh, uh,” Will stammered, “sorry for showing up a little early.” He laughed nervously to play off his awkwardness, but he stumbled.

Alana laughed, smiling back at Will which surprisingly eased him. “It’s all right, Will!” She reached to the side of the entrance to her front door to grab her purse and light jacket.

“We’re going to have fun tonight, so just relax.” She offered kindheartedly.

Will nodded as he stepped to the side to let Alana lock her door before walking with her out of the building to the subway. They talked the entire trip, well mostly Alana talked the entire trip with Will answering and commenting as much as possible.

For Will, despite his social anxiety, it was easy to talk to Alana, although she seemed overly concerned for his wellbeing from time to time. Much like Hannibal actually.

Will wasn't sure where her concern stemmed from; however, Will shrugged off her insistence, telling himself that she was only being a good friend which caused him to relax a bit more with every passing minute. The only person he had a deep connection with was Hannibal, so the promise of a budding friendship with Alana eased any annoyance with her constantly checking in and hovering.

*Hannibal constantly checks in with me too, so it's harmless...*Will reminded himself once again as they neared their stop. As they walked to the address of the party, Will thought about mentioning Hannibal to Alana which he hadn't since they started speaking to one another. Yet, Will wanted to keep his time with Hannibal separate from his time with Alana. To Will, it felt strange for the two of them to know about the other.

*Also, I'm entitled to my own friends…*Will laughed at something Alana said before she knocked on the door to the brownstone.

"Come on, Will," Alana grabbed Will's hand as she ushered them inside, "I want to introduce you to a few people."

Will smiled back as he let Alana drag him through the hallway, stopping to greet a few people before entering the kitchen. Will hadn't seen neither Hannibal nor Frederick as they walked through the house, noting to himself that they should be there any minute.

The people Alana introduced Will to seemed tolerable enough and he soon found himself enjoying the atmosphere along with the company. This was the first time in a long time that Will ever felt truly comfortable in a social gathering without Hannibal. Years of being so close to one another had developed a dependency that was still lost on Will and struggling through years of constant miscommunication. Yet, despite all of this, Will pressed on, mingling effortlessly like a pro.

*Okay, maybe this night will be fun…*Will grinned to himself as he listened to one of Alana's friends describe a fishing trip he went on with his parents that past month.

Since arriving at the party, Alana and Will stayed mostly in the kitchen, now drinking a beer with some friends. Most of the party attendees were medical professionals, students or related to the field somehow, however Will didn't feel out of place. Usually in situations such as this, Hannibal would serve as a social shield against any unpleasant conversation Will sought to avoid, however Will could feel himself easing up; it also helped having a friend like Alana nearby.

However, the comfortable feeling of enjoying oneself at a party with his own social life quickly dissipated once Will spotted Hannibal walking into the kitchen with Frederick not too far behind.

Fuck. Will swore in his head. *Oh my god...is Frederick really following Hannibal. I'm going to punch him in the face if he says anything to me…*

Both Hannibal and Frederick were laughing loudly, well, really Frederick was laughing loudly, and Will could tell that Hannibal was only pretending to enjoy Frederick's company, nodding at whatever the jerk was cackling about.

Ugh…fuck my life… Will quickly turned his back to face away from the huddle that had formed around Hannibal and Frederick. He was sure Hannibal had seen him, but Will prayed that his best friend would be cool enough to let him fly solo at the party. He knew they would probably end up in bed together that night anyway.

"Oh my god, Will. Look." However, Alana had noticed Hannibal before Will could do anything about it.

"There's Hannibal Lecter." Alana inched closer to Will, whispering as if Hannibal were some sort of celebrity.

Will frowned at Alana's sudden shift in behavior. *Um what?* He wondered internally.

"He's *so* good looking!" Alana continued, transfixed on Hannibal who was now standing directly across from them on the other side of the kitchen appearing as if he hadn't already detected that someone was ogling over him.

Are you fucking kidding me? Will watched Alana stare back at Hannibal.

Hannibal could see both Alana and Will staring back at him as Frederick chatted his ear off. He chose only to nod and wave, sending an already swooning Alana more butterflies into the pit of her stomach. Will fought the urge to roll his eyes, only waving back at his friend.

Jesus, she's treating Hannibal like everyone else… Will laughed nervously as Alana continued on about Hannibal.

"I've only met him once," she had turned her body slightly to face Will again, reluctantly peeling her eyes of Hannibal, "I did an internship at Mount Sinai over the summer. He seems so cool!"

This time, Will let his eyes roll, a move that was subtly lost on a star-struck Alana. He wasn't sure if he should now mention that they knew each other; Will couldn't believe that a friendship with Alana that seemingly had nothing to do with Hannibal now had everything to do with Hannibal before things became more serious.

I should probably mention something… Will groaned in his head…*it would be awkward if I don't say something and then if she finds out later…*

Will cleared his throat. "Hannibal's…actually my roommate…" He sighed as soon as he finished his sentence. He took a huge swig out of his beer can, knowing that the conversation for the rest of the night would revolve around Hannibal.

This is exactly what I was trying to avoid…

Alana's eyes nearly bulged out of her head at the admission. "What? Really?! How do you know him?" Her eyes grew bigger with anticipation.

“We grew up together…,” Will began. He didn’t need to nor want to explain anything else to Alana. She was fawning over his best friend who he got to fuck around with almost every other day.

However, something about all of this didn’t sit well with him. His mind began to wonder; he thought about Hannibal flirting with all the interns at the hospital, a thought that made him instantly angry and hurt.

Ugh, fuck...I mean...he’s definitely capable and I know it’s none of my business because he’s not my boyfriend...but…

Alana did another double take at Hannibal as Will’s thoughts rambled on. Will was now almost annoyed with how starry-eyed Alana seemed over Hannibal.

Jesus...he’s not that great...well I mean...he is...but I can't say that to her…

As Alana geared up to pepper Will with more questions, Hannibal and Fredrick made their way over to their side of the kitchen. Frederick was grinning like the bitchy jerk that he was, however, something about Hannibal’s expression appeared kind. Will winced as Hannibal and Frederick approached them; he could tell that Hannibal knew something was up about his relationship with Alana.

“Hi, Hannibal!” Alana greeted a little too loudly. Hannibal smiled at her before Frederick cut in front of him to flank Will and Alana.

*Seems a little unnecessary…*Hannibal thought to himself as he looked directly at Will who look uncomfortable. *Seems unnecessary that he would keep his friendship with Alana Bloom a secret from me…*

Will tried to play off his anxiety in front of Hannibal, but it became increasingly apparent that he was uneasy. He fidgeted and shuffled around as if he were gearing to bolt from the kitchen at any possible moment. And it didn’t help that Frederick was now involved in whatever abstract triangle of angst had formed between Will, Hannibal, and Alana.

“William!” Frederick shouted, “I’m so sorry I didn’t extend you a personal invitation to this party. Didn’t think you knew anyone like you know Hannibal.” He grinned as he slapped Will on the back, lingering a bit as he indicated the level of past and current intimacy between Will and Hannibal.

Ugh, fuck you, *Frederick.* Will thought to himself, too paralyzed to retort as he tried to keep his cool in front of Alana and Hannibal.

Will looked at Hannibal who appeared calm and unbothered by Frederick’s assertion. And perhaps a little too calm; it was a dramatic shift from his usual encounters with Frederick. Typically, Hannibal was quick to come to Will’s defense or shoot Frederick another snide remark that would shut up the latter for the rest of the night. Yet, for some unexplained reason, Hannibal seemed unaffected.

What the fuck, Hannibal?

Frederick, now aware that he had unbridled rein to shit on Will only laughed at the tension. His smirk turned even more evil than it ever had looked before as he geared up for another wisecrack.

“Will—” As Frederick attempted to hurl another insult, Hannibal held out his beer glass in front of him, physically stopping him as he leaned in toward Alana.

“Alana, we miss you at the hospital.” Hannibal began, looking mostly at Alana, but out of the corner of his eye at Will.

Will breathed a sigh of relief, yet it disturbed him that his best friend had taken so long to defend and/or stop Frederick from berating him in front of other people.

Alana’s eyes lit up from Hannibal’s comment. Will backed away as best as he could as Alana nearly doubled over on herself from the thought of Hannibal taking an interest in her work.

“Oh!” She laughed, “that internship was amazing. I learned so much. And I miss everyone, too!”

“Well, you did a fine job. I wouldn’t be surprised if we saw you back there.” Hannibal grinned as Alana barely held it together.

“Oh! I would love that!” Alana’s usually professional demeanor melted like chocolate in Hannibal’s charming embrace.

For a split second as both Hannibal and Alana continued on giving each other compliments, both Frederick and Will shared a look of disgust as Hannibal and Alana ventured down memory lane together. Frederick was annoyed that no one was talking to him, and Will was annoyed because Hannibal was hogging Alana, or, for some unexplained reason he wasn’t ready to face, he was annoyed that Alana was hogging Hannibal.

Fuck...Will swore to himself again.

Then it finally happened. Will realized, as Alana giggled at something Hannibal had said, that maybe he didn’t want the two of them to meet because maybe he was interested in Alana while being wrapped up in whatever friends with benefits nonsense with Hannibal. His unchecked emotions were at the surface, and he could either be a good sport about it or make a scene.

However, and unwisely, Will chose to make a scene.

“Hannibal!” Will interrupted Alana as she went on and on about a class she was interested in taking because Hannibal had mentioned it to her during her internship, “can I speak with you for a second, please?”

Alana stopped talking, but it was clear that the interruption from Will had caught her off guard, mostly because she was so hung up on talking to Hannibal Lecter that she had forgotten about her typically overly anxious friend she had come to the party with. Hannibal gave Will his full attention and Frederick huffed loudly but everyone ignored him.

“Will,” Hannibal started, “I think Alana was in the middle of something—” But before Hannibal could smooth out his best friend’s rude behavior, Will was already leading him away from the huddle, gripping his arm tightly at the elbow.

“There they go again.” Frederick muttered under his breath, taking another sip from his beer glass, rolling his eyes the hardest they’ve ever been rolled.

Thankfully, Alana seemed to have missed the comment; she only stood still, confused and left behind with a bitchy Frederick who was extremely irritated that Hannibal was ignoring him with more Will Graham drama.

Will dragged Hannibal into the hallway and up a flight of stairs so that they could be alone, pinning Hannibal up against the wall. Will couldn’t quite comprehend his emotions in the moment; it felt like he was jealous of Hannibal getting along with Alana, but then again, he was also jealous that Alana seemed to be ignoring him as she was talking to Hannibal.

*I really don’t care what either of them do...*Will lied to himself as he took a second before addressing Hannibal. Maybe he *was* annoyed because Hannibal was talking to someone else instead of paying attention to him.

God, I sound like Frederick.

“Will.” Hannibal gently held Will away from him so he could straighten his dress shirt. On the outside, he remained calm, however, on the inside, Hannibal was beside himself with how envious Will appeared with his relationship with Alana.

Will backed away, feeling his cheeks flush from his erratic behavior. He couldn’t turn back now; he had already gone this far.

“Let’s go home,” Will inched closer toward Hannibal, who was still right up against the wall, calm, “this party is boring.” He ended his proposition by placing one hand on Hannibal’s chest, peering slightly upwards with a coy smile.

Hannibal glanced downward, smirking at Will like he had done in the kitchen. “What about your friend?”

Will looked away from Hannibal, thinking for a split second that he had originally wanted to get to know Alana better that night. He shook his head as he looked back up at Hannibal who was still looking at him intently.

“I’ll just tell her I’m not feeling well.” Will placed both hands on Hannibal’s waist as he tilted his chin upward some more to kiss Hannibal. Hannibal kissed him back as he rubbed his back.

Will moaned as he pushed up against Hannibal’s body, moving his hands up along his sides, feeling him as best as he could without tearing his shirt off. Hannibal hugged him against his body while they made out. They kissed for some time before the door to the bathroom on the second floor opened. Will wrenched himself away from Hannibal as a party goer emerged

from the bathroom before saying hi to Hannibal. Hannibal reciprocated the gesture as he and Will waited to be alone again.

Will flashed Hannibal the most flirtatious smile before pinning him up against the wall to kiss him again. “Let’s go home…please?” Will asked softly as he stopped kissing Hannibal to look at him.

Hannibal waited for a second before nodding back; he had wanted this the whole night, but something about Will being so close to Alana seemed off.

Will smiled as he grabbed Hannibal’s hand. He led him down the stairs, letting go of his hand has they entered the kitchen. They found Frederick talking to Alana who looked like she was trying to escape the conversation.

“Alana,” Will started as he walked up to the pair, “I’m not feeling too great. I think I’m going to go home.”

Alana nodded as her expression turned grave. “Okay, do you want some company?” She offered as she reached out to rub Will’s shoulder.

Both Will and Frederick glanced backward at Hannibal who had stayed near the entrance of the kitchen watching the exchange from afar.

“I’m okay. Hannibal’s coming back with me.” Will patted Alana’s hand on his shoulder.

Alana nodded with a smile as she looked back at Hannibal. “Okay,” she then reached out to give Will a hug who accepted it meekly, “please let me know when you get home, okay? Maybe we can get lunch tomorrow?”

Will nodded as he pulled away from Alana. He looked at Frederick who was grinning at him before walking back toward Hannibal.

“Bye, William! Call me later, Hannibal!” Frederick shouted with a wave.

Hannibal waved back at Frederick before reaching an arm around Will’s shoulder as soon as the latter was near enough to do so.

Back at the apartment…

Will followed Hannibal into his bedroom before hopping onto the bed, sprawling out. He then sat up to take his shirt off before placing his phone on the bedside table as Hannibal stopped at the edge of the bed, crossing his arms.

“You and Alana Bloom seem close.” Hannibal offered in a low soft voice as he looked downward at Will.

Will shuffled around on the bed, acting as if he were trying to get comfortable. “Um…yeah. She’s nice.” He coughed out before scooting closer to Hannibal to wrap both arms around his friend’s waist.

“Oh, well, I assume that’s very true.” Hannibal didn’t buy it and Will knew Hannibal didn’t buy it.

Fuck, he can tell I’m hiding something.

“Are you going to fuck me or not?” Will let out, trying to change the conversation.

Hannibal didn’t say anything else as he let Will pull him onto the bed. He knew that if he showed any signs of jealously toward Will’s friendship with Alana, it could ruin the Chicago trip before it even started.

Will breathed deeply as he hugged Hannibal against his body. He moaned as he pushed upward into his friend, feeling his backside until his hands met Hannibal’s ass. Hannibal pushed downward in Will feeling him as he kissed him deeply, running one hand along his chest as the other propped him up slightly to shift into a better angle downward into Will.

Will moaned louder as Hannibal pushed downward into him. His body bucked upwards quickly as Hannibal kissed his lips before moving to his neck and then his chest to suck on his nipples. Will moaned deeper as he held Hannibal who was feeling him with both his mouth and his hands. Hannibal straightened up to give Will a kiss but before they could go any further, Will’s phone vibrated loudly.

Both Will and Hannibal jerked from the interruption. “It’s just a text,” Will said as he tried to kiss Hannibal but Hannibal was now looking at the message that Will had received.

“Alana wants to know if you got home okay.” Hannibal coolly remarked before looking back down at Will.

Will cringed as he sat up. He laughed nervously. “Yeah, she wanted me to let her know when I got home.”

Hannibal sat back near the edge of the bed. He waved at hand at Will’s phone. “Okay, why don’t you tell her you’re home.”

Will frowned; something about Hannibal’s demeanor was still very much off.

“Um,” Will picked up the phone to look at the message. He then looked at Hannibal who appeared to be waiting patiently for him to type out a reply.

Will: Just got home. Thanks for checking in!

“There,” Will placed the phone back down on the bedside table, “can we get back to it now, please?” He laughed nervously again.

Hannibal stared back at him; Will wasn’t sure if he was about to call the whole night off. Instead, after a moment of silence, Hannibal lunged toward Will, wrapping both hands

around his body before pinning him to the bed.

Will moaned as Hannibal pressed down into his body, rubbing him vigorously. Hannibal held both of Will's arms down as he began grinding his body against his, moving one hand to hold Will down on his chest.

"Fuck…Hannibal…" Will let out as the sensation intensified. Hannibal had fucked him hard before but never like this and they were only rubbing against each other.

Will felt Hannibal's hard cock rub against his. His body shook as Hannibal's movements quickened. Will moaned deeply as he used his free hand to push up against the headboard, feeling himself get lost in the moment. Hannibal pushed down hard as he rubbed himself faster against Will. Will could feel himself approaching the edge along with feeling Hannibal's body get there as well.

"Fuck, Hannibal. I'm so close!" Will called out.

Hannibal groaned as he slowed down to push into Will harder. Will moaned loudly as he let out a release, convulsing under Hannibal's weight.

Hannibal groaned once more before laying on top of Will. He kissed Will's neck before sliding to the other side of the bed. Both of them panted for some time before their labored breathing returned normal.

"Fuck that was hot." Will breathed as he sat up to look down at Hannibal, "are you planning to do that again while we're in Chicago?" He grinned as he leaned downward to kiss Hannibal.

Hannibal kissed him back before letting go of Will. "I guess we'll see how it goes."

Will laughed as he hopped off the bed. He looked back at Hannibal as he looked around for a tissue box before handing Hannibal one. He couldn't help staring back at his friend; he remarked to himself everything he thought attractive about Hannibal before climbing back into the bed.

Will laid down on Hannibal's chest as Hannibal reached over to hug him against his body. As Will thought about being so close to his best friend, he also began to think about Alana. He wasn't sure why he was thinking about her now, especially after messing around with Hannibal.

"Goodnight, Will." Hannibal whispered before shuffling around in the bed to get more comfortable.

"Goodnight, Hannibal." Will whispered back, wondering to himself if Hannibal was thinking about Alana.

Actually, Hannibal was thinking about Alana, but more in the context of making sure he didn't lose Will.

Part Forty - Eight

Chapter Notes

> Just letting you all know that I went back to the previous chapters to do some line editing, but of course the content is the same :)
>
> And thanks for reading!

About two weeks later…

"I'll wait here and keep the car warm for you two."

Hannibal and Will had just pulled up in front of Abigail's grandparent's house. She was planning to spend the night at their place again before their trip to Chicago. It was cold that day and the clouds looked like they were on the precipice of yielding to a thunderstorm.

Will nodded and smiled before closing the passenger door. Despite the introduction of Alana Bloom into their otherwise peaceful yet awkward arrangement, Will loved spending time whenever he could with Hannibal and Abigail. To Will, their time together almost felt otherworldly, functioning outside of all the drama and discord in his personal life that Will felt like he barely had any control over.

"Shouldn't be too long." Will said back to Hannibal as he ascended quickly the two steps to walk to the front door of the house.

He knocked as soon as he reached the door, waiting patiently as he huddled inside his jacket before looking back at Hannibal who was watching him from the car. Will smiled slightly before looking away; the last week or so had been more than awkward really since the night at the party.

Will had been texting Alana regularly since but he still kept his friendship with her private. Hannibal hadn't said anything since that night, so Will figured he had taken the hint that he needed some space when it came to Alana. But Will wasn't really sure why he needed the space from Hannibal.

Maybe we've been smothering each other too much…

After another minute or two the door to house opened and Abigail's grandmother emerged, smiling up at Will.

"William!" She greeted before reaching out to hug Will who hugged her back, "Abigail's up in her room still getting ready. I'm sorry to keep you waiting."

Will shook his head with a laugh. This was usual with Abigail; she always wanted to make sure she had the right books, stuff animals, and what not before spending the weekend with Will and Hannibal.

“It’s no problem. I’m sure I can help her hurry along.” Will offered as Abigail’s grandmother beckoned him inside.

Will walked into the family room of the house. Abigail’s grandmother had covered every single surface with every antique knickknack she could get her hands on. It reminded Will a lot of his mother and her penchant for collectibles.

“Would you like some tea, William?” Abigail’s grandmother asked from the kitchen.

Will nodded as he walked into the kitchen. “Sure. I’ll go see what Abigail’s up to and then I’ll come back down and sit for a bit.”

The comment made Abigail’s grandmother blush as she then turned to brew some tea for both herself and Will. Will jogged up the stairs leading to the second-floor hallway. He looked around to see that the door to Abigail’s room was ajar. He took his time approaching, smiling to himself like he usually did before he saw Abigail.

“Abigail,” Will called as he opened the door, “you ready to go yet?” He teased.

He stepped into the room to find Abigail hunched over her travel bag, carefully considering which item will go in next. Will smiled at her; she looked a lot like Hannibal whenever he inspected food at the farmer’s market. The thought was surprisingly soothing to Will while it should have reminded him of the awkward triangle that was forming between himself, his best friend, and Alana Bloom.

“Hi, Will!” Abigail greeted before turning back to her task, “I’m almost done.” She placed a book into the bag along with another stuff animal before zipping the bag closed.

Will laughed as he sat on the edge of her bed. Abigail looked up at him with a sincere smile. “What are we doing this weekend?” Abigail asked.

Will shrugged. “I have a paper due at the end of next week, so I thought it would be good to take it easy so I can find some time to finish writing a draft, if that’s all right.”

Abigail nodded emphatically. “Can I help you? I want to go to grad school someday, too!”

Will grinned, refraining from laughing because he didn’t want to sound discouraging to Abigail. “Tell you what, you can look over what I’ve written so far, sounds good?” He offered with a genuine expression.

Abigail clapped her hands together before reaching out a hand toward Will to shake. “Deal!” She offered back.

Will laughed as he gave Abigail a firm handshake before pointing to her bag. “You need any help?”

Abigail shook her head as she hoisted the bag from the floor before slinging the strap onto her body. “Nope!” She answered before jogging out of the room.

Will chuckled as he followed her out. He walked downstairs and back into the kitchen. “Where’s Hannibal, Will?” Abigail was searching around in the kitchen as if Hannibal would magically reappear.

“He’s in the car waiting for us.” Will answered which prompted Abigail to run toward the front door.

“Abigail!” Her grandmother shouted, “you need a coat!” But it was too late; Abigail was already outside.

Will laughed as he sat down at the table. “I can take it out to her after I finish my tea.”

Will sat with Abigail’s grandmother for a bit, talking about grad school and Abigail. Will appreciated the time; he realized he needed a moment to figure out how to talk to Hannibal about the past week before spending most of the weekend entertaining Abigail.

“Is something the matter, William?” Abigail’s grandmother asked as she cleaned up the table.

Will shook his head with a sigh as he put his coat back on. “No, I’m just stressed per usual.” He tried as a joke but could tell that Abigail’s grandmother wasn’t buying it.

She eyed him which made Will feel a little uncomfortable. Eventually, she backed off as she turned to place dishes in the sink.

“Well, have a good weekend and I’ll see you on Sunday.” She extended which Will was grateful for.

“Sounds good,” Will turned to exit the kitchen, “we’ll be on time this time.” He called before closing the door.

Not long after…

Will, Hannibal, and Abigail were on their way back to the apartment. Abigail was sitting in the back of the car, excitedly catching Will and Hannibal up on everything that had happened to her since they last saw her. Will had been observing his friend as he listened; Hannibal appeared like his normal self, but Will could tell that something was off.

I really hope this doesn’t have anything to do with Alana…

And of course, Will knew it has something to do with Alana, he just didn’t want to deal with it because he knew if he knew the truth, it would put a wrench in his relationship with Hannibal.

“Look, there’s a puppy!” Abigail cried gleefully which interrupted Will’s mental meandering.

They were stopped at a traffic light. Both Hannibal and Will peered out on the passenger side to see a scruffy looking puppy at the corner of the sidewalk. He was covered in mud and looked worn out and lost.

Aw, he’s super cute. Will thought to himself. He looked over at Hannibal who kept driving as soon as the traffic light turned green.

“Hannibal, we can’t just leave that dog.” Will tugged on his friend’s jacket to get him to pull over.

“Will. We talked about this. We don’t have enough space in our apartment for a dog.” But Hannibal knew he might end up losing this fight with Abigail in the car.

“Hannibal! He’s so cute!” Abigail commented from the back seat.

Will chuckled and nodded his head. “It’s also super cold outside and raining, and he looks he needs a bath. What if we kept him for the night and called the pound tomorrow?” Will held onto Hannibal’s arm and squeezed.

Ah, come on Hannibal.

“Please, Hannibal? Please?” Abigail bounced her body to hug Hannibal from behind the seat.

Hannibal looked back at Abigail through the rearview mirror before looking slightly at Will who had the same expression on his face as Abigail. After a moment or so of silent contemplation, Hannibal sighed as he turned the car into a vacant driveway in order to turn around back toward the puppy.

Both Will and Abigail cheered as Hannibal drove back to the spot where the puppy was now sitting, shivering in the rain. As soon as Hannibal stopped the car, both Will and Abigail jumped out of the car and toward the puppy. They both petted him a few times as Hannibal found some blankets in the trunk.

“Let’s cover him in this.” Hannibal handed the blanket to Will who used it to wrap around the puppy. Hannibal then used another blanket to place down in the back seat with Abigail.

Will picked up the puppy and sat in the back with Abigail before they drove off back toward the apartment.

“Oh my god, he’s so cute!” Abigail exclaimed as she whipped mud off the puppy’s face.

Will laughed as he held the puppy against his chest. The puppy squirmed a bit and was now happily barking from being recused from the rain. Hannibal looked back at both Will and Abigail commenting on the puppy. He smiled outwardly at the scene.

As soon as they reached the apartment, both Will and Abigail sprinted to the bathroom to give the puppy a much-needed bath. Hannibal followed them in, watching the scene unfold. Will turned on the water to the tub and the puppy started splashing water and mud all over the

space. Will and Abigail laughed as they tried to hold the puppy still so they could clean him properly.

Hannibal watched them silently before finally joining. “May I help?”

Will looked up at Hannibal as the latter knelt down next to the tub. “Sure, Hannibal.” Will smirked, “not afraid of getting dirty?” He teased.

“You have no idea.” Hannibal quipped back before splashing water on Will. The move made Abigail laugh as she and the puppy were splashing more water and mud.

After an hour or so they finally got the puppy cleaned. They carried him into the living room, still covered in a blanket.

“What should we name him?” Abigail asked as she sat with the puppy on the couch.

Will looked at Hannibal who look at stoic as ever, however, Will could tell this time that being around the puppy for only a couple of hours had soften Hannibal’s feelings toward having a dog in their apartment. Hannibal looked over at Will and shrugged.

“What do you think?” He asked.

Will smiled before posing thoughtfully. It was a big decision and he needed to make it count.

“How about…Winston?”

Abigail perked up. “I like it!”

The next afternoon…

Will sprinted out of the subway stop and toward the café a block away. He was late to having lunch with Alana who had been waiting about thirty minutes for him to arrive.

Shit…I’m always so late! Will heaved out a breath as soon as he reached the door to the café, looking around for any sign of Alana.

He saw his friend sitting at a table in the middle of the café with her back facing the entrance. He could see that she was reading a book. Will gathered himself before entering, telling himself to be cool as he approached the table.

“Hey,” Will patted Alana on the back as he finally reached her, “I’m sorry I’m late.”

Alana beamed up at Will before getting out of her chair. She reached out toward Will to give him a hug which he accepted. She held onto the hug a little longer than he had expected which made him blush instantly.

“I always know you’re going to be late, so I started bringing something with me to keep me entertained.” Alana quipped as she sat back down in her chair.

Will blushed again as he sat down, thinking about all the times Hannibal had said something similar to him in the past.

But why am I thinking about Hannibal right now? Will told himself to focus on the lunch with Alana and not whatever weird shit was going with Hannibal.

“I’m not that bad, am I?” Will told himself to relax as he watched Alana place her book back into her bag.

“You are. But it’s cute.” She teased back as she rested her elbows on the table, causing Will to laugh nervously, thinking again about Hannibal always teasing him.

Will gulped as he looked downward at his hands which were now interlaced on top of the table. Alana and Hannibal were definitely different from one another, but they had something similar in common by teasing Will about his various personality quirks.

Something about the thought arrested Will for a second as he listened to Alana then talk about something that had happened during one of the Columbia lecture series that past week. Will nodded as if he were really listening, now comparing both Hannibal and Alana in his mind as if it were some sort of bizarre potential relationship spreadsheet. Will’s face scrunched up as his mind wandered.

“Will? Uh, are you okay?” Alana asked, looking concerned for her friend’s current demeanor.

Will shook his head and smiled. “Yeah, sorry. What was that again?”

Alana laughed as she shook her head. “Off in your own world again, right?” She smiled to convey that she was only teasing Will.

Will laughed nervously as his face turned red. He was ashamed now that he was comparing both Hannibal and Alana together, and for what, he wasn’t sure.

I’m just friends with the both of them… Will reminded himself as if sleeping with your best friend and potential courting another constituted being “just” friends.

Alana laughed. “So, how’s Hannibal? How’s he adjusting to the new puppy?”

Will attempted a frown but then recovered quickly. Ever since the party, Alana would ask him about Hannibal which was becoming annoying. It was annoying mostly because Hannibal was still being weird and Alana seemed oblivious to the fact that her presence was putting a damper on their relationship.

Will nodded. “He’s doing fine. Actually, I think Winston likes him the most.” He offered, but refrained from going further.

Alana smiled. “Hannibal’s a great person so I’m not surprised.”

This time Will grimaced. This was becoming a regular thing, Alana complimenting Hannibal whenever possible. It aggravated Will to no end because he wanted her to just pay attention to him.

*I mean he's fine…*Will lied to himself.

"Uh, so we're going on a trip to Chicago next week." Will tried changing the subject, but the word "we" let Alana know that he was still talking about Hannibal.

"Oh! What for?" She asked with a broad smile.

Will shrugged. "Hannibal's presenting a talk for the Mount Sinai Chief Resident or whatever at some conference in Chicago and asked me to go with him."

Alana clapped her hands together. "What? Are you serious?! That's the biggest conference happening this year! Hannibal is going to do such a fantastic job. I wish I could go."

Will nodded as he stared back at Alana gushing over Hannibal giving this talk. It hadn't dawned on him how big of a deal this talk might be and that other medical students and professionals would be interested in going, which then led Will to think that there was a possibility that he could run into someone like Frederick or maybe even Donald.

*Nah…he's only a minor nuisance…*Will reminded himself as he listened to Alana go on and on about how great Hannibal would be at the conference and that she wished she could hear the talk.

*Jesus…okay already…*Will didn't want to keep talking about Hannibal, especially with Alana.

"We have to get dinner after you guys get back. You can tell me all about it."

Will continued to stare back at Alana. He was having trouble trying to figure out her intentions. Lately, Will thought that she might be interested in him, which he wasn't sure he wanted. But then at times she seemed interested in Hannibal, which also bothered him. Well, it bothered him a lot, actually. He thought about the way she acted with Hannibal at the party.

"We should get more dinners together in general, Will. I love spending time with you." Alana added.

Will kept staring back at Alana, too shocked really to response like a normal human. Ever since his relationship with Hannibal turned physical, Will had never had anyone else proposition him for any type of date. Will knew it was because he spent all of his free time with Hannibal and now Abigail, but it didn't occur to him that this was the first time in a few years.

"Uh," Will stammered, "yeah, sure, that sounds great," he took another moment as he looked away at the entrance of the café, almost expecting Hannibal to appear to ruin the moment.

"I love spending time with you, too."

Later that evening…

“Night, Abigail. And remember we need to get you back to your grandmother’s on time tomorrow.” Will was standing in the threshold of his bedroom saying goodnight to Abigail who was snuggled in his bed.

“I know, Will! Goodnight.” She called back before Will turned the lights off.

Will smiled to himself as he closed the door. He looked in the direction of Hannibal’s bedroom before walking toward it. Will had been debating since lunch with Alana whether he should say something about the way Hannibal had been acting the last week or so. They were still sleeping together, but Hannibal seemed distant. A little too distant and it was beginning to freak Will out.

Will inhaled deeply before turning the knob slowly to Hannibal’s bedroom door. He opened it to find his friend sitting up right in bed with the bedside table lamp on and reading a book. Will looked at him before walking to the side of the bed he usually slept on.

Hannibal barely responded as Will slid into the bed next to him. Will propped himself up with an elbow as he reached over to caress Hannibal’s chest.

“Whatcha reading?” Will asked as playfully as possible.

Hannibal nodded before closing his book to place back down on the bedside table. “Something on medieval torture.”

Will scrunched up his face. “Uh, *okay*, weirdo.” He then sat up in bed before straddling Hannibal.

Will pushed down into Hannibal’s lap, rocking forward slowly as he rested his hands on his friend’s shoulders. Will moaned as he leaned forward to kiss Hannibal’s neck. But all the while doing so, Hannibal barely responded to any of his movements.

Will sighed as he straightened up. “Okay, Hannibal. What’s going on?”

Hannibal shrugged as he placed his hands on Will’s waist. “I’m fine.”

Will frowned. “No, you’re not. I’m all over you and you’re lying there like a dead fish.”

Hannibal looked up at Will intently. “How was lunch with Alana today?”

Will’s eyes went wide before he settled, confused as to why Hannibal would be talking about Alana at this very moment.

“It was fine. Come on, seriously, what the fuck is wrong?” Will tried again as he sat down in Hannibal’s lap.

“Will, I said I was fine.” Hannibal repeated, sounding less like himself which alarmed Will to a certain degree. This was the first time since the party that Hannibal had said something about Alana and something about it was bothering Will.

Will waited before running his hands up along Hannibal’s arms. “Alana’s just a friend.” He said with caution, but not really sure why he had. The comment seemed to elicit something in Hannibal who looked at him directly.

“Why would you feel the need to tell me that?” Hannibal responded as coolly as ever.

Will sat back, panicking now that maybe he had said something to ruin the night. Will quickly thought about the trip to Chicago. He didn’t want anything to ruin that either, but something about Hannibal appearing jealous about Alana was a little thrilling.

“Because you sound jealous.” Will ultimately answered.

Hannibal looked back at him, his expression still very much the same. He squeezed Will’s waist. “Why, should I be?”

Will’s face couldn’t help but react to his friend’s behavior. Will liked spending time with Alana and yes, he was still confused about his feelings towards her but he also didn’t want to lose Hannibal. It sounded as if his reluctance to expand on their friendship with Hannibal was bothering his best friend.

“Hannibal, why are you so dramatic?” Will smiled as an attempt to diffuse the situation. He leaned forward to kiss Hannibal who took a second before kissing him back.

Will bucked his hips forward as he kissed Hannibal, moaning and letting his hands roam along his friend’s shoulders. Hannibal was kissing him back, but it felt off to Will. After a few more minutes of making out, Will pulled back to lie down next to Hannibal.

“I’m excited for the trip. I’m excited to see you do your thing.” Will turned on his side to gauge Hannibal’s reaction.

Hannibal only nodded as he laid down flat in the bed. Will rolled his eyes as he caressed Hannibal’s chest before running it up his shirt to feel his chest more.

“Also, I hope we get alone time,” Will whispered as he scooted closer to Hannibal as he kept feeling his body, “I think we need to get away.”

Hannibal turned his head slightly to look at Will who was now moaning quietly from feeling his body. Hannibal nodded as he turned more to hug Will up against his body, humping him lightly as he felt his back side. Will moaned some more before kissing Hannibal again, running his hands along Hannibal’s back before they reached his ass.

Will pulled away to look Hannibal in the eyes. For some odd reason, Will was having trouble trying to read his friend. Will caressed Hannibal’s face before giving him one last kiss.

Hannibal smiled, albeit narrowly, back at Will, expressing an emotion Will had only maybe seen once. Maybe the same one that looked a lot like the first time they had sex.

...fuck...? Will thought.

“What time is our flight leaving again?” Will asked as he flipped over onto his other side, thinking that he might lose Hannibal if he continued to keep his friendship with Alana a secret.

“Monday, at 10am.” Hannibal answered.

Will shut his eyes close as the bed shift a bit to indicate that Hannibal was moving around. He expected to feel Hannibal against his body, but nothing to that effect occurred. Will opened his eyes and propped himself up to see that Hannibal was hugging the edge of his side of the bed.

Will frowned. He stared at his friend before plopping back down in the bed.

Okay, I’ll just be nicer to him when we’re in Chicago. Will reassured himself as he tried to drift off to sleep, completely forgetting the rules to their "arrangement".

Part Forty - Nine

Chapter Notes

> Soooooooo, due to the new rules on tagging, I had to remove a tag to be within the limit so I chose "lots of sex". I think its obvious from the rating tag that this story has that in it so I hope that doesn't throw people off...

That following Monday…

Will was reluctant to leave Winston behind; they had adopted him a few days before their trip to Chicago, but luckily Alana had volunteered to house/pet sit for them while they were away.

Will and Hannibal had left that morning for their flight, landing in Chicago with enough time to get something for a late lunch after checking out their hotel accommodations. Mount Sinai had booked one of the nicer hotels in the city for the Chief Resident and Hannibal and Will would get to enjoy the hospitality on the hospital's dime.

I made sure to find the live stream channel for Hannibal's talk. I'm so excited!

Leading up to that Monday, Alana had been badgering Will nonstop about the Chicago conference. Well, it felt that way to Will.

While showing Alana around the apartment before leaving for the trip, at some point Will watched her cuddled with Winston on their couch, remarking to himself how cute Alana looked with their new puppy. But the thought had been a distressing one, one that was still marred by his confusion over whether he thought he was attracted to Alana.

"What the absolute fuck…" Will exhaled with amazement as he walked into the hotel room, which was really a suite.

He stopped in what looked to be a hallway leading to three large rooms: a kitchen area, a living room and a master bedroom that had a bathroom attached to it.

Will wandered around as Hannibal went directly to the kitchen. "Hannibal!" Will called from the bedroom, "this place is amazing!"

Will followed the sound of Hannibal's laughter to the kitchen. He found his friend looking through the cabinets. Will smiled as he walked up to Hannibal from behind, giving him a tight hug.

"You should check out the bedroom. The bed is huge." Will whispered.

Will felt Hannibal reach behind himself to rub what he could of Will's back. Will sighed as he held onto his friend for some time, basking in his scent, remarking to himself that Hannibal smelled a lot better than he did from airplane travel, which was amazing yet predictable; Hannibal always managed to hold it together better than Will could ever.

They embraced each other for some time before Will let go. "Let's go check out the rest of this suite before getting something to eat."

Hannibal turned around to look at Will who smiled up at his friend. Well, Will tried to anyway; something about the way Hannibal was looking at him was arresting in the moment. Yet, he told himself not to worry about it as he grabbed Hannibal's hand before leading him to the bedroom.

As soon as they reached the doorway into the bedroom, Will broke out into a run before launching himself onto the bed. Turning over onto his back as soon as he made contact with the sheets, Will laid out with his hands behind his head, giving Hannibal a suggestive look. Hannibal smiled as he took his time approaching the bed, taking his time to lay down on top of Will who received him whole heartedly.

Will moaned as he felt Hannibal push down into his body. He rubbed his hands along Hannibal's backside as he pushed upward, moaning louder as he felt Hannibal rub his body against his. Will lost himself in the moment until vibrations from his phone brought him right back out of it.

"Shit." Will cursed out loud as he realized that his phone was still in his back pocket. He maneuvered around a bit to sit up on his forearms.

Hannibal, unfazed, sat up on the bed watching Will play around with his phone. "It's just Alana." Will mentioned as he typed back a quick reply.

Will looked up at Hannibal who remained unbothered as ever. After a moment of awkward staring, Hannibal rose from the bed to exit the room.

"I'll see what's around for us to try for lunch, perhaps dinner later as well." Hannibal offered as he left the bedroom.

Will sat up in the bed as a confused and hurt expression slowly spread across his face. He was beginning to think that maybe he was taking the thing with Alana—again, whatever that meant—way too far. Too far to the point that Will thought that he might have already ruined the trip before it really started.

"There's a meeting I must attend tomorrow morning," Will could hear Hannibal call from outside the bedroom. Will nodded as if he were occupying the same space as Hannibal.

Will looked down at the message Alana had sent him. It was a picture of Winston wrapped up in a blanket. Will couldn't help but smile, but the smile soon faded as he heard Hannibal's voice once more.

"…and then later tomorrow evening is the reception."

Will nodded back again before groaning as he slammed his body against the bed, lying back down with a full force. “Okay!” He shouted back, “sounds fun!” He lied.

Will stayed on his back as he looked up at the ceiling. *I’m definitely going too far…but…*

Will never imagined that his friends with benefits arrangement with his best friend would end up this complicated (although it was obvious from the beginning that it would be). He never thought he would end up possibly having feelings for someone else besides Hannibal—

Wait…what? Will froze as the thought crossed his mind. Why would he be considering whether he had feelings for Alana when he was on a trip with Hannibal? Also, did he have feelings for Hannibal?

And what about Hannibal…Will groaned…he could tell that his best friend was becoming distant because of some change in their relationship. And that only change so far had been Will spending more time with Alana, but Will couldn’t bring himself to that conclusion because he struggled with reconciling his feelings toward his best friend.

Will groaned once more, so much so that Hannibal reappeared in the bedroom to find Will now flipped over onto his stomach, sprawled out like a starfish.

“Will?” Will could hear Hannibal’s voice, but his head was facing away from the bedroom door and at the window on the opposite side.

Will barely moved as the bed dipped down a bit to indicate that Hannibal was now sitting next to him. Will waited, no hoped really, for Hannibal to touch him, to show that he wasn’t actually upset with him spending more time with Alana, but Will felt no such signal which made him feel even more worse.

“We should get something to eat.” Hannibal continued without missing a beat; his tone sounded a bit off to Will which was even more alarming.

“Yep.” Will responded as he straightened up on the bed in time with Hannibal rising to walk back to the door.

Will silently followed Hannibal out in the suite hallway before waiting for his friend to call a cab for them to get lunch.

Later that evening…

Alana: Look at this picture of Winston 😊

Will smiled to himself as the picture of their puppy appeared on his phone. He laughed; Winston was wearing a partially knitted cap Alana had been working on.

Hannibal was across the table from him, in the middle of explaining to Will the plans for the rest of the conference.

“Will?” Hannibal interrupted himself, “you haven’t touched your food.” He looked intently at his friend who was now fumbling with his phone underneath the table.

“Um, what?” Will typed out a reply on his phone before looking back at Hannibal who, according to Will’s increasingly inability to accurately read his best friend, looked a tad irritated.

What? Will thought to himself as he laughed, reaching for a fork to poke at whatever Hannibal had ordered for him at the unnecessarily fancy restaurant they were dining in.

I’ve never seen him like that before…

“Sorry,” Will laughed again as he shoveled some food into his mouth, surprised that he actually liked whatever Hannibal had ordered for him.

“Alana was just updating me on Winston.”

Hannibal’s expression changed quickly back to content as he nodded back at Will. Will had to prevent himself from making a face; Hannibal had been like this since they left the hotel that afternoon.

Lunch, well, had been awkward at best. Will tried to be as playful with Hannibal as much as possible, telling his friend all the places he wanted to see in the city in the short amount of time they had during the conference. But while doing so, Will’s phone was on the constant attack from a stream of messages from Alana. Some of them about Winston, while a majority were just the two flirting (I think I can say that) with each other.

And of course, Will wasn’t being honest with himself still about the whole situation. He was very much attractive to Hannibal and liked being with him (even if he couldn’t admit that he might actually have feelings for his best friend, but that’s a conversation for later in the story). Also, Will was finding himself becoming attracted to Alana.

Alana was nice, funny, smart, caring, etc. Everything anyone would hope for in a partner, but she wasn’t Hannibal.

“Is everything okay?” Hannibal asked as he took a sip from his water glass.

“What?” Will nearly choked on another bite.

“Winston,” Hannibal started again, “is everything okay with Winston?”

Will scrunched up his face before realizing that Hannibal was referring to the message he had received from Alana.

“Oh!” Will laughed as he rubbed the back of his head, “yeah he’s fine. Alana just sent me a picture of him in a knitted cap.”

Will tapped once on his phone until he found the picture of Winston to show to Hannibal. He held the phone across the table and Hannibal leaned forward to inspect it. Will watched his best friend; the latter smiled slightly before leaning back to sit up straight in his chair.

“Well, I only ask because you seem to be mostly occupied with Alana.” Hannibal causally offered as he returned to his food, but his tone was calm and sounded genuinely interested, well to Will anyway.

Will sat back in his chair, feeling himself becoming frustrated with his best friend constantly mentioning how many times he spoke with Alana.

Jesus, it’s not a big deal. Will thought instead of saying out loud.

Will leaned forward in his chair. “Sorry, I’m paying attention now.” He smiled at Hannibal.

Hannibal laughed before taking a sip out of his wine glass. “Will, I don’t mind, truly.”

Will shrugged. “About what?”

Hannibal laughed again, however, the back and forth with Will over Alana was becoming a nuisance. Hannibal had managed to keep most of his annoyance with the subject to himself due to his practiced mannerisms, however Will had been spending more time with Alana on top of texting and calling her constantly.

“You and Alana. I don’t mind if you’re interested in her.” Hannibal finally volunteered as he reached for his water glass once more.

Will scrunched up his face; this was the first time since meeting Alana that anything specific about being interested in her was said out loud, and he wasn’t sure what to say about it.

“Uh,” Will squirmed in his seat, “what?” He nervously responded.

Hannibal smiled slightly as he took his time placing his glass back down on the table. “I don’t mind if you’re interested in her.”

Will blinked a few times as he tried to figure out what to say next. Sure, of course there was something about Alana that Will found attractive, but he never thought that Hannibal would be so cool about it, even given their awkward arrangement. And of course, as always, it bothered Will.

“Hannibal,” Will leaned forward over the table to look at his friend more intently, “why are we talking about this right now? Aren’t we on some sort of pseudo vacation?” He tried as a joke, but it fell completely flat with Hannibal whose expression remained eerily the same.

Hannibal grinned slightly as he looked away from Will. Feeling exceedingly uncomfortable with the situation, Will mimicked Hannibal’s posture but then he quickly looked back at his friend.

“Hannibal,” Will started back up again as he sat back in his chair, “I don’t know how many times I have to make this clear, but I’m *not* interested in Alana, okay. We’re just friends.” He

lied to protect how he was feeling and irrationally thinking that he would lose his best friend because of it.

Will waited to see if that worked with Hannibal but the latter never flinched. Will rolled his eyes; he looked away from Hannibal, feeling his emotions bubbling up to the surface. Considering everything they've been through, he would have thought that Hannibal would have reacted more.

Fuck...Will thought, but he wasn't sure what type of reaction he wanted from Hannibal.

The whole dinner atmosphere had changed; now it felt like some sort of game the two friends had been playing with each other since the first time they had sex. And Will wasn't sure if he no longer knew the rules. Here they were on a trip just the two of them and they were having a conversation Will had been hoping to avoid.

Hannibal silently watched Will; he waited quietly as emotion to emotion worked itself onto his friend's face. Hannibal remarked to himself that Will hadn't ever appeared this agitated in their entire relationship and he hoped it was finally an opportunity for his friend to see that their arrangement wasn't worth the fuss.

Yet, Hannibal never broke his resolve. It hurt knowing that Will was so flustered around and about someone else, but he would never let on.

"I didn't think so." Hannibal finally answered back.

Will stared back at Hannibal, completely dumbfounded, but he focused on his food to steady himself. Some time passed before their waiter approached their table again. Through a weird daze, Will barely heard Hannibal order dessert before the waiter asked him twice what he would like as well. Will finally snapped out of it to give his order.

As he listened to Hannibal talk about the rest of the conference, Will thought about Hannibal's comment about Alana.

I didn't think so...something about it was unnerving to Will as if Hannibal were trying to covertly tell him something rather than being straight forward. But of course, neither of them would be until much later in their relationship.

The next hour or so was painful at best. Both friends waded through awkward conversation with Hannibal seemingly unbothered by the mood change and Will fumbling over himself. As soon as they finished their dessert and coffee, they took a cab back to their hotel.

Will quickly opened the door to their suite with his key and made a beeline for kitchen. He steadied himself against the counter, thinking to himself how he could salvage the night. He had been looking forward to this trip and now it was nearly wrecked by Alana talk.

Will felt his phone vibrate, possibly brought on by another text from Alana, but he ignored it. It confused him that he had found himself becoming attracted to her but then again he was also upset that Hannibal didn't seem to care or think that they would work.

Why doesn't he think I would be interested in her? Will thought to himself as he poured himself a glass of water.

He turned around from the counter to see Hannibal entering the kitchen, stopping at the counter between the living room area and the kitchen. Will smiled at his friend who reciprocated the expression slightly.

"We should go to bed," Will started before finishing his glass, "don't you have a meeting tomorrow?" He grinned at Hannibal before sauntering toward him.

Hannibal watched Will walked toward him before pulling him into a hug which he accepted. Will tilted his chin upward to kiss Hannibal, letting his hands roam along his friend's backside. Will felt Hannibal tightened his grasp around his body which prompted a silly smile on his face.

Okay, maybe we're fine… Will thought to himself before letting go of Hannibal, taking his hand to lead him to the suite's bedroom.

Will opened the bedroom door before dragging Hannibal toward the bed. Will positioned them both so that Hannibal was up against the side of the bed before pushing his friend onto it. Will straddled Hannibal's waist, pushing downward into his body, moaning slightly from being so close to Hannibal.

Will leaned forward as he felt Hannibal place his hands on his ass. Will smiled as he kissed Hannibal on the lips, rolling his hips forward before pushing down harder into Hannibal's body. Everything felt fine and back to normal, but only momentarily.

"Will," Hannibal kept his hands on Will's body, but he kept them still, "I really do need to get a good night's rest for tomorrow. You understand."

Will stopped what he was doing. He frowned before straightening up to look down at Hannibal. Will winced; the way Hannibal was looking at him made him feel uncomfortable.

"Okay…" Will started as he took his time dismounting Hannibal to lie down on the bed. He watched Hannibal get up from the bed and walk to the adjoining bathroom.

Will groaned as he rolled over onto his side facing away from the bathroom door.

What the fuck… Will sighed to himself as he laid flat on his stomach before burying his head into a pillow.

The following morning…

Will woke up suddenly as sunlight pierced its way through the bedroom curtains. He groaned as he tried to wake himself up fully. After a yawning fit, Will turned over onto his other side,

expecting to see Hannibal but the latter was gone. Will sat up in the bed annoyed at first, but then he slowly remembered that Hannibal had left early for a meeting.

However, as Will sank down into the bed, wallowing in his misery, he thought about how unusually standoffish his best friend was with him last night. Will had expected they would have had sex by now, especially on vacation.

Like really, Hannibal…what the actual fuck…

Will groaned loudly again before moaning slightly as he felt his body ache from sexual frustration. He wasn't sure what he should do; now he felt like he was losing his best friend. And curiously, Will wasn't upset about losing out on the friends with benefits arrangement. But, and of course, it didn't dawn on him in the moment as he waded through his agony alone in a hotel suite bed.

Will closed his eyes shut as he thought about what to do. He had told himself before coming to Chicago that he needed to pay more attention to Hannibal, but he was confused by his friend's behavior.

Will turned onto his side to face the window and to look away from Hannibal's side of the bed. He couldn't stop their little arrangement; it was great having sex with Hannibal. However, Will was beginning to think that maybe it was ruining their relationship.

After a minute or two of confusing thoughts, Will sat up in the bed. He yawned once more but it wasn't satisfying. He took his time swinging his legs out from under the bed sheets before dragging his weary body to the living room area. Will found the conference program on top of the counter separating the living room and the kitchen areas.

Will sighed, thinking about ordering breakfast before flipping through the program. He reviewed each day until he stopped at the paper presentations. Suddenly, his breath hitched as his eyes stopped on one name he hadn't seen in a while.

…Donald's here…?

Will stared down at the program as he felt his heart drop to the pit of his stomach. He began to wonder if Hannibal's strange behavior had something to do with his ex-boyfriend being at the conference, while completely forgetting that it might have been something to do with Will's growing close relationship with Alana.

Will threw the program across the counter as he marched into the living room, pacing back and forth, his mind reeling from the possibilities.

Hannibal would tell me if he were still fucking Donald, right? Will tried to calm himself down, but he struggled.

I mean, that would explain why he was so cool about the possibility of me being interested in Alana…

He sank down into a sofa, too paralyzed to stand. He didn't understand why Hannibal didn't tell him that Donald would be in Chicago.

Will groaned as he felt his eyes warm up with tears. He then, thinking irrationally, marched to the bedroom to find his phone in an effort to rage text his best friend.

Will snatched his phone from the bedside table, tapped on it once and started an angry and curse-laden draft but before he could tell Hannibal that he knew he was keeping something from him, a message from Alana appeared.

Alana: would it be okay to take Winston to the dog park today?

Will stared blankly at the message, trying to reorient his emotions. He swiped away Alana's message to get back to texting Hannibal, but then he stopped.

Will sat down on the edge of the bed as he tossed his phone behind him on top of the sheets. Maybe Hannibal wasn't keeping anything from him, maybe it was just a coincidence.

Will leaned forward to place his head into his hands. Hannibal would be back later that morning to tour the city with him, so Will had some time to himself to gather his thoughts. Will inhaled and then exhaled deeply before rising from the bed. He walked to the bathroom, thinking about the conference reception later that evening, thinking about ways to show Hannibal that he cared about him and would only pay attention to him during the trip unless there was an emergency they needed to deal with.

However, as Will walked into the bathroom, he thought about Alana and Winston. Will turned slightly to look back at his phone on the bed. He walked back to the bed and picked up his phone.

Will: I think that's okay! Make sure he's wrapped up 😊

Will smiled, thinking about Alana and Winston for a bit longer before walking back into the bathroom.

Part Fifty

Later that evening…

Hannibal and Will rode in a cab to the convention center that was hosting the main events for the conference and that evening's reception.

"Right here is fine, thank you." Hannibal handed the cab driver some money before exiting.

Will lingered a bit; he looked out the cab window at the oversized convention center flanking the river front. Will had been staring out the window for some time that it instantly startled him once Hannibal opened his door.

"Ready?" Hannibal smiled down at Will as he reached a hand out.

Will stared down at his friend's hand for a moment before slowly looking up at Hannibal, but he wasn't sure what to do. Something about Hannibal standing there being polite while surrounded by a nice temperate evening air was a little off to Will.

Indeed, the whole day had been a strange one for Will. He managed to refrain from blowing up on Hannibal about Donald, thanks mostly to occupying his time texting Alana about Winston and what not. Also, for some inexplicable reason, Hannibal's behavior had taken a complete 180 from dinner the night before and it confused Will even more. It angered him that Hannibal possibly knew about Donald being at the conference which then fueled thoughts that maybe Hannibal was secretly seeing Donald behind his back.

"Uh," Will took another moment before taking Hannibal's hand, "I guess." He smiled up at Hannibal as he finally got out of the car, but of course it felt strained.

As soon as Hannibal helped Will out of the car, Will let go of his hand to straighten out his outfit which Hannibal had picked out for him earlier that evening.

While listening to Hannibal muse about which tie fit best, Will had noticed that his friend was being more flirtatious with him since the beginning of the trip. However, Will fought against flirting back, all the while thinking of ways to show his frustrations with his best friend once the opportunity presented itself.

Yet, as Hannibal regaled him with stories about some of the people they would meet during the conference as they took their time entering the convention center, Will felt himself easing up. He could no longer stay as angry as he was with Hannibal earlier that day and whatever the fuck was going on with Donald.

"We're planning to have dinner tomorrow with some people as well, so I hope it's not boring." Hannibal concluded as they approached the center's main doors.

Will giggled, which caught him off guard a bit. "Hannibal, I'll be okay. I'm with you."

Hannibal smiled at Will as he motioned for him to enter, and Will smiled back as he took his friend's hand again. Will blushed somewhat as he looked down at Hannibal's hand, thinking about the way Hannibal had looked while choosing the shirt he was currently wearing.

Okay, maybe we can salvage this trip somehow… Will thought to himself as he looked up at Hannibal whose expression never wavered.

Why Will thought that their trip was close to ruin even though it just started was only indicative of the tensed atmosphere between the two friends since landing in Chicago and perhaps their relationship at large. Yet, as Will told himself to just go with the flow that evening because it seemed like Hannibal was trying, nothing worrisome about the state of their relationship bothered him like usual.

Will let Hannibal guide him through the entrance. "We won't stay long…" Hannibal offered softly as Will wrapped an arm around his.

Will smiled again as he increasingly forgot about Donald being at the conference and the way Hannibal had been acting the last twenty-four hours.

"What if people think we're dating?" Will whispered as they entered the lobby, now holding tightly onto his friend's arm. The comment was unexpected to both Will and Hannibal considering everything that had transpired prior, but Will was too caught up in the moment.

"I wouldn't mind that." Hannibal answered after a second before disengaging himself from Will to walk ahead of him.

Will blushed again as he followed Hannibal closely from behind. The lobby of the convention center was filled with small groups of people standing around and talking while more voices emanated beyond the other side of the double doors leading into the main space for the reception.

Will glanced around as Hannibal retrieved their conference badges. Will waited by some conference posters and a table full of pamphlets before Hannibal met up with him again, motioning for them to enter the reception space. Will smiled at Hannibal once more as they walked together into the space. They were standing close together; Will thought maybe he shouldn't stand so close as if it signal they were together, but he did so anyway.

As they entered the space, they were met with an elegant display filled with advanced medical students, residents, doctors, and the alike from around the country. Will had been expecting the reception to be nice, but he was immediately intimidated.

"Would you like something to drink?" Will heard Hannibal's soft voice through his daze which calmed him down somewhat.

Will leaned in toward his friend, now inexplicably comfortable despite having been upset and confused by Hannibal since they landed in Chicago.

"Sure." Will smiled up at Hannibal who then led them to the elaborate bar set up.

Will took a moment to look around the space again as Hannibal ordered them drinks. Will could feel his social anxiety dissipating a bit as he leaned up against the counter, listening to Hannibal chat with the bartender.

This isn't so bad. Will thought to himself as Hannibal handed him his drink.

"So," Will sipped from his wine glass as he scooted closer to Hannibal, "you're not mad at me anymore?" He said halfheartedly, but then regretted it.

Hannibal shuffled a bit as his expression turned stern. Will smiled to convey that he was only teasing, but he was inwardly kicking himself for possibly putting a damper on the night.

"I'm joking, Hannibal. This is nice," Will then inched even closer toward his friend, "thank you for bringing me along. It means a lot."

Hannibal's expression remained stoic for a second or so before morphing into contentment. While he was originally annoyed and perplexed by his friend's behavior, being at the reception with Will provided Hannibal the opportunity for the two of them to focus on each other, which had been the point of the trip in the first place.

"Of course. I'm glad to have you here." Hannibal whispered back as Will looped an arm around his waist. Both felt so comfortable in the moment that it was easy to forget that they were at a reception attended by a multitude of people and not off somewhere alone where they could be more intimate.

But as the moment become warmer and cozier, ghosts of Will and Hannibal's relationship of the past (and perhaps the present) appeared closed by.

"Nice to see you, Hannibal."

Will heard someone cough next to them to get their attention. He looked up at Hannibal who was now looking off to the side. Will turned slightly to see that they had been interrupted by Donald who was standing too close to them, holding a drink, looking incredibly nonchalant for someone running into an ex who was obviously in love with someone else.

"Donald." Hannibal moved away from Will to greet Donald. Donald smiled as he stuck out a hand, but Hannibal pulled him into a hug instead which made Will cringe beyond belief.

What the fuck?

Will cringed some more as Donald held onto the hug with Hannibal longer than one would expect of a lover scorned.

What the absolute fuck?

"It's really nice to see you here." Will heard Donald repeat as the latter pulled away from the hug but held onto Hannibal at the waist.

"Likewise." Hannibal responded, never letting go of Donald until what felt like a millennium to Will.

Will looked back and forth between Hannibal and Donald, feeling raw, past emotions.

Are you fucking kidding me?!

“Hey, Donald.” Will wedged himself in between Hannibal and Donald, holding a hand out and trying not to freak the fuck out at an unnecessarily fancy event at his best friend who had been putting him through the emotional ringer.

“Hey, Will. How are you?” Donald smiled as he shook Will’s hand and Will internally cursed at Donald and the entire situation.

“I’m fine.” Will muttered back as he then used drinking out of his wine glass as an awkward distraction.

Donald nodded back, seemingly unbothered by Will’s behavior like he had been in the past when he was dating Hannibal, which disturbed Will even more.

“Prepared for your talk tomorrow?” Donald turned slightly to look at Hannibal whose gaze was intensely focused on Donald. Well, it seemed so to Will anyway who was silently seething.

“I think I’ll have to be no matter what.” Hannibal laughed, which sounded incredibly bizarre to Will.

What the hell?

And to Will’s perpetual chagrin, Donald began laughing with Hannibal. Will half grimaced as he watched his best friend flirt with someone else right in front of him.

Are you fucking kidding me?! Will cursed in his head again.

Hannibal and Donald continued to banter back and forth with each other, appearing to forget that Will was standing near them and not contributing to their riveting conversation.

Fuck this. Will attempted to turn around away from Hannibal and Donald but Hannibal prevented him from doing so by looping an arm around his waist and pulling him close.

Will blushed as he leaned up against Hannibal’s body. He looked at Donald who appeared unfazed by the move, continuing on about a seminar he was planning to sit in on and that Hannibal should do the same. Will wasn’t really listening; well, he had been tuning Hannibal and Donald out since the beginning of the conversation but now he wasn’t listening because Hannibal was holding him tightly at the waist.

Hannibal paused from the conversation to point beyond Donald at a resident on the other side of the space.

“Actually, I see someone I need to talk to about the presentation tomorrow. Excuse me for a second.” Hannibal smiled at Donald as he let go of Will.

Will glanced awkwardly around the space as he watched Hannibal leave the huddle. He was trying to look at everything else that was within in eyesight, but he could see Donald eyeing him closely.

“So,” Donald started after taking a sip from his wine glass, “Hannibal seems happy.”

Will turned slightly to acknowledge that he heard Donald, but he only nodded back.

Donald shuffled back and forth. “I knew you guys would end up together.” He ended the statement, curiously, with a smile. It was contained but Will didn’t feel any resentment behind it.

Actually, as Will turned his body more to respond, he could tell that Donald sounded happy for them. Or at least relieved.

*But we’re not dating…*Will quickly reminded himself and of all the other times anyone who came in contact with them thought they were also dating.

“We’re not dating.” Will then quickly said out loud to Donald, attempting to shrug off the comment and his anxiety regarding the subject.

Donald continued to eye Will as if silently signaling that he didn’t believe him.

God…please let this be the last awkward interaction I’ll ever experience…

“Well, I know it’s none of my business…” Donald continued, making Will internally squirm because all he could think about was the way he had acted in front of anyone Hannibal had dated in the past.

“…but I do think you guys look great together. Cheers.” Donald lifted his wine glass with another courteous smile.

But instead of leaving Donald hanging, Will mustered up enough civility to cheers his rival back. Donald sipped from his wine glass again before pointing across the room.

“There’s a resident I’ve been meaning to talk to today. Nice seeing you again.” Donald patted Will on the shoulder before walking away and Will nearly recoiled upon impact.

He looked beyond himself to see Donald saunter away before looking around to find Hannibal who was still chatting about his presentation. Will rolled his eyes as he walked quickly toward his friend, annoyed beyond anything he could handle that Hannibal seemed happy to see Donald, but forgetting that even Donald thought they looked like a nice couple.

“Hannibal.” Will managed a calm tone as soon as he reached his friend who was engaged in a very lively conversation.

Hannibal interrupted himself as soon as he heard and saw Will approach. “Will.” Hannibal introduced Will to the doctor he was speaking with before explaining his approach to something rather, but Will was too focused on seeing Donald again to care enough to even look interested in the conversation.

*I fucking can't believe he did this…*Will was so angry with Hannibal, but he knew he needed to keep it to himself in order to prevent a scene at the reception.

After some time, Hannibal and Will broke away from the conversation just to join another and then another, spending the evening speaking to other people than getting any alone time. Will knew that that would be the case before attending the reception, but he was becoming furious with Hannibal the longer the night wore on.

And finally, after another hour or so of painful schmoozing, Hannibal and Will took a cab back to their hotel. Will barely spoke to Hannibal as they rode the elevator up to their suite. He said even less as he headed straight for the kitchen area as soon as they arrived. Will could feel himself losing control. He simpered as he turned his body away from Hannibal as soon as the latter entered the kitchen.

"Will, are you all right?"

"Hannibal," Will clinched the edge of the counter as he told himself to calm down but was failing miserably.

"Why didn't you tell me…" Will took a deep breath before turning around to face Hannibal who was standing next to the kitchen counter that separate the kitchen and the living room area.

Will's face twisted with anger as he struggled keeping himself in check. "Why the *fuck* didn't you tell me that Donald was going to be here?"

Hannibal sighed but refrained from responding right away which angered Will even more.

"Oh my god, please don't tell me you're still fucking. Jesus, Hannibal!" Will marched out of the kitchen and into the living room area past Hannibal.

"Will, please." Hannibal turned around to face Will who was pacing back and forth wildly, "I spend most of my free time with you, Will. You're not thinking clearly."

The comment made Will stop short in his tracks. He knew Hannibal was right, but it still pissed him off that Hannibal was so nice with Donald at the reception.

Will stared at Hannibal for a second or two before shaking his head. He turned his back to face away from his friend as he felt his face becoming warm from how horrible he was feeling.

"Hannibal, I had to find out from a fucking program that Donald would be here at this thing. Why the fuck didn't you tell me?! You were all over each other at the reception!"

"Will—"

"And on top of that!" Will turned around sharply as he took a couple steps toward Hannibal, "you've been acting like the *hugest* asshole ever since we got here."

Will stopped to gauge Hannibal's reaction, but his friend's expression had remained the same.

“You’ve been giving me a hard time about Alana and for no apparent reason besides the fact that you’re fucking jealous! Just admit it!”

While this wasn’t the first time that Will had accused Hannibal of being jealous of Alana, it was the first time the comment seemed to suck all the air out of the room.

And to a certain extent, Will was right. Hannibal knew Donald was going to be at the conference and chose not to say anything in an effort not to upset Will, but he also hadn’t planned on Will gushing over texts from Alana. Hannibal knew he had taken it a little far by being friendly with Donald at the reception, but he was annoyed that Will was parading his relationship with Alana in his face. He knew it wouldn’t last; Alana had many good qualities, but Will was distracting himself from his feelings.

Hannibal stared back at Will who reciprocated the expression. The two friends eyed each other as if waiting for the other to finally breakdown and confess their true feelings. The minutes passed by as this much needed conclusion never arrived, as the two were both unwilling to show such vulnerability.

It was as if the game was now at a standstill; they were up against a point and whatever happened in the moment would determine the rest of their lives. And as the moments continued to pass, Will’s anger subsided as Hannibal appeared less like himself and more emotional about the situation as someone like him was able.

“Will.” Hannibal let out before walking toward his friend and wrapping both hands around his waist without missing a beat.

Will did the same as he pulled Hannibal into a deep and longing kiss, the sort of kiss he had been hoping for since arriving in Chicago.

“Oh my god, Hannibal.” Will whispered through the kiss as he felt Hannibal squeeze his body.

As they passionately made out for some time, it felt as if the tension between the two had evaporated for the time being. Will held onto Hannibal as he kissed him, telling himself that everything was okay now because Hannibal was no longer cold toward him.

“Hannibal…” Will pulled himself away slightly to look up at his friend who was now looking down at him with a kind expression.

Will wanted to say he was sorry, but he wasn’t sure what he was apologetic for. Was it texting Alana during the trip that verged on flirtation? Or was it accusing Hannibal of sleeping with Donald which Hannibal would have been in the right to do considering the rules of their “friends with benefits” arrangement.

Will looked away from Hannibal as he felt his friend’s hand move up along his body. Or was he sorry that their “friendship” no longer resembled the way it had before they started sleeping together.

“Uh…” Will felt tears in his eyes. For some reason he wasn’t willing to come to terms with, he missed the way they were before all of this. He also missed being close to Hannibal before he found out about all the other people Hannibal had slept with.

Will inhaled deeply before turning his head slightly to look at Hannibal out from the corner of his eye. Hannibal looked concerned which made Will feel even more worse.

Or maybe Will was sorry that he had asked Hannibal if they could be friends with benefits. Whatever the reason, Will felt remorse, so extreme the remorse, that he forgot about everything else that had happened since they arrived in Chicago.

“Hannibal…” Will started back up again, turning his body more in Hannibal’s embrace so he could look up at his friend more directly.

“I’m sorry…” Will let out quietly.

Hannibal took a moment before nodding back. “Me too.” He said softly. Will thought he heard more emotion behind it than was typical of Hannibal, but he didn’t care as he pressed his lips up against his friend’s, nearly knocking them both over from the intensity.

Will pushed Hannibal up against the counter facing the kitchen, pushing into his body with his own. Will let his hands roam all over Hannibal’s body; he yanked his shirt from his pants, feeling Hannibal’s skin as he moaned into his mouth.

Hannibal held Will at the waist as he moved one hand up to stroke the back of his neck. Will moaned again as he felt Hannibal’s hand in his hair. He pushed up against Hannibal more, feeling himself getting hard from just kissing Hannibal.

Will kissed Hannibal once more before disengaging himself from the embrace. He smiled up at Hannibal before looking in the direction of the bedroom.

“Let’s go to bed.” Will whispered before looping an arm around Hannibal’s to drag him to the room. Hannibal laughed as he let Will tug him along.

Will opened the door to the bedroom before pushing Hannibal inside. Hannibal sat down on the edge of the bed as Will climbed on top of him to straddle his lap. Will kissed Hannibal as he pushed downward, rolling his hips forward as he felt his body wanting to give in to his best friend.

Hannibal pushed upward into Will’s body, holding him at the waist as Will’s movement downwards was becoming more forceful with every stroke. Will rubbed his hands along Hannibal’s chest before pushing him to lie flat on the bed. He moaned as he humped his hard cock against Hannibal’s, moaning louder and louder as the sensation grew.

Will kissed Hannibal along his chin then down his neck as he continued to moan, rubbing his hands along Hannibal’s body. Hannibal pulled Will’s shirt of his body as he moved his hands downward to grab his ass. Will made a small noise before pushing down again, relishing in Hannibal kneading his backside.

After one last lingering push into Hannibal's crotch, Will sat up straight to look down at his friend. He had never seen him look like this before; Hannibal looked flustered, and they hadn't done much. Will mentally saved the image of Hannibal's expression as he put his hands on Hannibal's chest again.

"Let's take a shower." Will grinned before leaning downward to kiss Hannibal on the lips. He felt Hannibal push up into his body before turning them over onto the bed so that Will was now lying on his back.

Hannibal looked at Will, nodding before moving down along his body. Will gasped as he felt Hannibal leave kisses down the length of his body before stopping near his crotch. Will moaned as he felt Hannibal feel his hard cock through his pants, massaging him gently as he used his other hand to feel Will's chest.

Will gasped again as Hannibal took his time pulling his pants off, taking every moment to feel and take in Will's scent before removing his boxers. Will let out another gasp as Hannibal touched his naked cock with one strong hand, feeling up and down. Will closed his eyes as Hannibal took him into his mouth, feeling his tongue along the tip of his cock.

"Oh my god…" Will let out as he tried not to buck upwards into Hannibal's mouth from how great he felt, "fuck, Hannibal. This feels so good."

Hannibal moaned as he continued licking and sucking Will's cock. Will opened his eyes to watch Hannibal; he couldn't help himself from staring at the sight.

Will pushed into Hannibal's mouth as he felt himself nearing the edge. "Hannibal…" Will run a hand through Hannibal's hair as he told himself to take it easy.

Hannibal licked up and down Will once last time before moving up along his body again to kiss him on the lips. He then straighten up to pull himself and Will off the bed and into a standing position.

"Okay, let's take a shower." He grinned at Will who nearly lost it from how sexy the comment and Hannibal's expression appeared.

Hannibal took a hold of Will's hand before leading him to the bathroom. As soon as Hannibal opened the door to the bathroom, Will pushed him up against the bathroom sink, now trying to take the rest of Hannibal's clothes off. Hannibal laughed as he helped Will remove clothes before Will dragged him to the shower in the middle of the bathroom.

Will pushed Hannibal into the shower, feeling along his chest before kissing him deeply once more. He then reached to turn the shower on before kneeling in front of Hannibal. He massaged Hannibal's hard cock which caused Hannibal to moan. Will smiled to himself as he felt along before replacing his hand with his mouth. He breathed deeply as he took Hannibal in, moaning uncontrollably from how great Hannibal felt in his mouth.

Will licked up and down Hannibal's shaft, using his tongue to feel the tip of Hannibal before moving in to engulf him fully. He worked along like this as he felt Hannibal running his

hands through his hair. The warm water from the shower intensified the feeling as Will straighten up again to kiss Hannibal.

Hannibal wrapped both hands around Will's waist as he turned them around in the shower. He pressed up against Will's body, rubbing his hard cock against Will's, causing Will to moan louder than before.

"Fuck me, Hannibal." Will cried out softly as he felt himself losing control from just Hannibal rubbing his cock against his.

Hannibal pushed into Will's body one last time before turning him around. Will felt his naked body make contact with the tiles on the wall before feeling Hannibal's cock in between his ass. He moaned as he felt Hannibal's cock move up and down and his own cock slide up against the wall tiles. Will let out another moan as he felt a hand on his cock and another on his waist. The hand on his cock moved up and down as the other hand pulled him more into Hannibal's body.

"Fuck." Will let out as he felt Hannibal's sides as best as he could, but Hannibal was now pushing more aggressively into his body.

"Fuck me." Will whined again as he felt the water and Hannibal sliding up against his body.

Will let out another gasp as soon as he felt Hannibal rim the outside of his ass with one finger before pushing it in gently.

"Fuck." Will squirmed as Hannibal pushed the finger in and out before inserting another, taking his time feeling Will.

Will moaned as Hannibal fucked him with his fingers. *Fuck.* Will humped back onto Hannibal's fingers, pushing against the wall as Hannibal held him at the waist.

Hannibal continued in and out of Will until aligning himself up against Will's body again as he pulled his fingers out. Will whined as soon as Hannibal's fingers left his body, but then they were quickly replaced by the tip of Hannibal's cock.

"Fuck!" Will moaned as he felt Hannibal pushed into his ass, "this feels so fucking good."

Will felt Hannibal squeeze his ass before pushing in more. Will moaned as he humped Hannibal's cock as it slowly pushed its way in, the water helping it slide into Will who was beside himself from how great Hannibal felt.

Hannibal stabilized himself against Will before using one hand to run up along Will's body, massaging his cock for some time before running his hand along Will's chest, feeling and pinching his nipples. Will moaned and gasped from the sensation as he humped back harder into Hannibal. Hannibal's movements sped up along with Will's; they were in rhythm with each other as moans and groans escaped from the shower.

"Fuck, Hannibal. I'm so close." Will gasped as his body shuttered from feeling Hannibal's hard cock inside his body.

Hannibal pushed harder into him as he stroked Will's cock. Will bit the bottom half of his lip as he felt his body finally giving in. He moaned as he placed a hand on top of Hannibal's hand that was on his cock. He stroked his cock along with Hannibal, moaning louder as he pushed back onto Hannibal's cock.

"Fuck, Hannibal." Will gasped once more as he felt himself come all over his hand and Hannibal's before feeling Hannibal release into his ass.

Hannibal held onto Will as they both came, feeling his cock before rubbing his hand along Will's body. Will swore once more as he humped Hannibal's cock before Hannibal pulled away to turn him around. Will hugged Hannibal for a passionate kiss as the water ran along their bodies. They stayed in the embrace for some time as they felt each other's bodies for what felt like ages.

"That was so fucking hot." Will breathed through the kiss before letting go, but he kept his hands on Hannibal's waist.

Hannibal smiled down at him before using one hand to stroke his face. Will smiled as he closed his eyes, leaning into Hannibal's hand. He then kissed Hannibal once more, running his hands up and down Hannibal's back.

After kissing each other for another minute or so, they washed each other off before heading back to the bed with just towels around their waists. Will hopped onto the bed, spreading his legs out in such an inviting way that Hannibal laid down on top of him. They kissed each other as they removed their towels to hump each other's bodies again. Will moaned as he pushed himself up against Hannibal, losing himself in the kiss.

"Fuck, Hannibal. You feel so amazing." Will whispered as he kissed Hannibal on the lips one last time before lying down on his back.

Hannibal turned his body to lie on the side facing Will. He reached out a hand to stroke Will's face again, turning his chin slightly to look at him. Hannibal smiled which made Will melt before moving in to kiss him once more.

"So do you." Hannibal said through the kiss before pulling back.

Will couldn't help himself from smiling widely at his friend. He laughed before scooting closer to Hannibal to hug him tight against his body.

"I'm really glad you took me on this trip." Will whispered as he held onto Hannibal, feeling a hand run along his back.

"I'm glad you're here." Hannibal answered softly.

They held onto each other, embracing the other as if they just didn't have an argument over Alana and Donald. However, neither chose not to acknowledge it as the moment was nice and felt fleeting considering the state of their relationship.

Will kissed Hannibal on the neck before letting go. He turned onto his other side as he instinctively pushed back into Hannibal's naked body. He felt Hannibal wrap a hand around his waist as he closed his eyes, excited for the rest of the trip.

Part Fifty - One

The next morning…

Will yawned loudly as he opened his eyes slowly. He was lying on his side facing the bathroom door. He smiled to himself as he thought about last night—well the last part of last night in which he and Hannibal only adhered a temporary band-aid on their relationship woes rather than calmly discussing everything out in the open like two responsible and mature adults.

But, of course, Will wasn't thinking about that. He was thinking about the way Hannibal had touched his body and felt inside of him. The thought made Will moan softly as he felt a hand slide across his chest before hugging him close.

Will smiled as he took his time turning around to face Hannibal. "Good morning." He said quietly, reaching out to sweep some hair that had fallen in Hannibal's face.

Will noted to himself how different Hannibal looked in the morning, especially after fucking the night before. He usually liked seeing Hannibal like this; seeing his best friend not always composed and thoughtful like he was usually apt to be was thrilling for some odd reason. And to Will, it always had been.

"Good morning." Hannibal answered back before Will closed the gap between the two of them to kiss his friend gently on the lips before moving to his neck.

Will moaned softly as he pushed into Hannibal's body, feeling his backside as his thoughts were consumed with how sexy Hannibal looked the night before. Will smiled to himself as he hugged Hannibal against his body, finally feeling like he and Hannibal were on the same page for a change.

Will let out a satisfied sigh. "Where should we go today? Or do we have to do more conference things?"

Hannibal laughed as he also tightly hugged Will back. "Whatever you want. We're not obliged to do anything until the presentation later this evening.

Will sat up suddenly in the bed. "Can we go to the zoo?"

Hannibal chuckled as he propped himself up on his forearm. "You mean you *don't* want to see the art museum?"

Will smiled as he bit his bottom lip before rubbing Hannibal's chest with both hands, pushing Hannibal gently to lie back down in the bed. Will climbed on top of Hannibal to straddle his waist; he pushed down slowly, continuing to rub his hands down Hannibal's chest as he looked down at him.

“I don’t mind either way…” Will answered quietly as he continued downward past Hannibal’s waist and stopping short of his crotch.

Hannibal’s expression was inviting as he ran both hands up along the sides of Will’s body as the later rubbed his hands along Hannibal’s thighs. Will moaned again as he leaned forward to kiss Hannibal on the lips. They embraced each other for a few more minutes before Will broke away to gaze down at Hannibal.

“But I still really want to see the zoo. So, let’s make sure we do that.” He sneered at Hannibal which made his friend laugh.

The sound of Hannibal’s laugh made Will blush as he pushed Hannibal back onto his back again before directly laying down on top of him. They made out in the bed for some time before finally getting up to get ready for the first part of their day, which consisted of visiting both the zoo and an art museum before eating lunch.

One would assume that the conversation from the night before would have appeared as an important topic between the best friends, however, both Hannibal and Will artfully evaded it, focusing most of the conversation on each other as they toured the city and acting closer than ever before. It almost felt like the time Will had visited Hannibal in New York before they started sleeping together; everything felt right, and Will couldn’t help himself from being caught up in it.

Rather than dwelling on their problems, Will focused instead on how great it felt feeling close to Hannibal again; noting to himself that Hannibal seemed more like himself as it related to the good parts of their relationship. Will could feel himself becoming more vulnerable, vulnerable to the point that he felt like telling Hannibal how much he cared about him. But as they took pictures in Millennium Park, Will refrained from doing so; he subconsciously felt the need to keep Hannibal somewhat in the dark about his feelings as a standing defense mechanism.

“Okay, make sure you hold the phone at a different angle this time.” Will joked as he wrapped a hand around Hannibal’s waist.

Hannibal chuckled as he tilted his phone before snapping another selfie of the two of them in front of the Cloud Gate. Will laughed as the flash on the phone went off.

“How about that?”

“Okay,” Will took Hannibal’s phone to look at the photo, “this one is a little bit better.” He smiled before holding the phone up before kissing Hannibal on the cheek as the flash blinked once more.

“All right, this one is the best.” Will laughed as he handed Hannibal his phone back before walking away.

“Let’s keep moving!” He motioned for Hannibal to follow him.

Will felt Hannibal catch up with him as a hand landed on his waist. He smiled as he wrapped a hand around Hannibal's waist as they walked together.

A few hours later…

"At Mount Sinai, we've grouped our patients in several categories which we found to be the most useful in tracking their progress…"

Will was sitting in the back of the auditorium as Hannibal spoke. He was holding up his phone while using a video chatting app to live stream so that Alana could watch Hannibal's presentation.

Hannibal was standing in front of a lectern. His body was turned sideways so that he could motioned behind himself at the projection of his presentation slides while also acknowledging the audience. Will smiled as Hannibal spoke; the euphoria he felt from spending time with his best friend while actively avoiding all of their problems was still very much present. Well, present until he glanced around the auditorium and saw Donald sitting close to the front.

Fuck… Will cursed to himself, almost dropping his phone.

"…some of our results were negative, but then we eliminated various variables that yielded more accurate results…"

Will swore silently as he tried adjusting his position without making a scene. From his position, he could see Donald smiling and nodding at every single word Hannibal uttered and at one point chuckling jubilantly at something clever Hannibal dropped during his otherwise dry presentation.

Will rolled his eyes as he told himself to stay focus while also reminding himself that he was the one spending time with Hannibal and not Donald.

I mean, Hannibal's right…he wouldn't have had time to see Donald anyway… Will took a deep breath as he continued filming.

I still fucking hate that guy, though… Will rolled his eyes as he watched Donald for some time before training his focus back onto Hannibal who was nearing the second half of his presentation.

After another hour, Hannibal elaborated on a final case study before ending his presentation to a round of applause. Will continued streaming before closing the app on his phone, but before he stopped the stream, he caught Donald approaching Hannibal to talk about the presentation.

Jesus fucking Christ, he is so fucking annoying. Will turned his phone around so he could send a text to Alana.

Will: Sorry that my filming skills are subpar :p

Will waited before approaching Hannibal; he wanted to distract himself so he wouldn't glare at Hannibal speaking with Donald but as soon as Hannibal was freed from his conversation a cascade of people lined up near the lectern to also ask him questions.

Will groaned as he shoved his phone into his pocket. He sighed; he knew this would happen given the fact that Hannibal had just given the keynote speech of the conference, but he figured Hannibal wouldn't keep him waiting too long. They were planning to get drinks with a few others and Will wanted to get that part of the night over as quickly as possible.

I can't believe I agreed to that… Will thought back to earlier in the day when Hannibal asked him if he was up to socializing with some of the conference goers…*I don't want to talk to any of these people, but I'll do it for Hannibal…I guess…*

Will sighed again before summoning up enough courage to drag himself to the front of the auditorium. Hannibal was now chatting with a group, standing casually with such calm that Will couldn't stop staring at him.

Fuck… Will swore to himself as his thoughts returned to last night and the way Hannibal felt against his body in the shower.

The deluge of memories was suddenly interrupted as someone bumped into Will to talk to Hannibal who was still standing at the lectern as he fielded questions. Will grumbled something back as he told himself to cool it.

"Hannibal!" The person shouted, "excellent presentation. I thought maybe…"

Will blocked the conversation out as he could feel his anxiety heighten as he watched people swarm Hannibal. He was left off to the side, hoping that someone like Donald wouldn't take advantage of the situation to talk to him. Will could feel his frustrations boiling over again as he waited for Hannibal to finish his conversations so they could go out to eat.

Will fidgeted around as he waited, feeling his phone vibrate in his pocket. Grateful for something to distract him again without appearing aloof, Will reached into his pocket to fetch his phone. He peered at the screen to see that Alana had sent him a reply, but something about it was jarring.

Alana: Thanks for live streaming Hannibal's talk. Would you like to get dinner with me when you get back? Just the two of us 😊

Will stared blankly at the message as he felt his face flush.

"Ready to go?" Will shoved his phone into his pocket as soon as he heard and felt Hannibal behind him.

Will swallowed a lump in his throat as he turned slightly to acknowledge his friend who had placed a hand on his shoulder.

Fuck, did he see that message? Will panicked.

"Uh, yeah." Will attempted to recover but he was sure Hannibal saw Alana's message.

Hannibal eyed Will which made the latter feel uneasy. On the surface, Alana asking Will out to dinner wasn't a significant deal, but because of the tension between Will and Hannibal, the outwardly unsuspicious text catapulted their issues to the fore again.

Hannibal eventually smiled as he motioned for Will to follow him. "I could use a glass of wine."

Will chuckled nervously at Hannibal before walking with him out of the auditorium as some people joined them to ask Hannibal some last-minute questions. Will glanced around the group, hoping not to see Donald, but it appeared that Donald had already left.

Good…I hope I never see that guy again…

Hannibal was chatting with a few people, but he was walking close to Will, which the latter appreciated. Although the beginning of their trip had been marred by their relationship troubles, Will welcomed the calmness Hannibal exuded whenever Will was suffering from his social anxiety.

The size of the group shrank as they exited the convention center to meander down the waterfront, everyone except Will talking all at once, discussing which of the posh restaurants and bars they should try.

The group wandered all along the way while Hannibal stayed close to Will. At one point, while in deep conversation over some newly researched radical medical experiment, Hannibal had looped an arm around Will's waist.

Will blushed as he leaned more into Hannibal before the group found a suitable bar and restaurant. The group walked in and eventually Will found himself standing near a tall table next to the window with a view of the water. Hannibal was off to side talking to someone but once in a while he would glance back at Will as if to silently confirm that his more reserved friend wasn't suffering to much from the social onslaught of having to be somewhat friendly at an academic conference.

Will smiled back at Hannibal as he sipped from his beer glass. Suddenly and unexpectedly, he thought about Alana's last message which he hadn't replied to yet. He wasn't sure what to say. He also wasn't sure if he should say anything to Hannibal, especially after the way Will had acted over Donald being at the conference.

I mean, having dinner with Alana isn't really that big of a deal… Will assured himself as he turned his head slightly to look out the window.

As they were walking to the bar and restaurant, Will had thought about telling Hannibal about dinner with Alana. But as he watched his friend maneuver effortlessly from conversation to conversation, Will told himself not to bother with it because, as he reminded himself once more, it really wasn't a big deal. Alana was supposed to be a friend.

Right, Alana and I are just friends…

Yet, as Will could sense the intense emotional bond he usually felt with Hannibal, even in situations like this, he finally decided against saying anything. He didn't want another argument, although Hannibal never admitted either way whether he was jealous of Will's friendship Alana. Will thought about calling Hannibal on his feelings, especially after last night, but he decided against that too.

"How are you doing?" Will watched Hannibal lean on the table he was standing at.

Will smiled with a shrug. "Surprisingly okay. I think I'm good if I don't have to talk to anyone." He joked.

Hannibal grinned as inched closer to Will so that he was close enough to wrap an arm around Will's waist.

"I've been better." Will joked again as he looked up at Hannibal.

The comment made the smile on Hannibal's face widen just a bit. Will blushed as he let Hannibal drag him toward a group of people, but Will didn't mind. It felt nice being this close to his friend when they out like this.

Will also felt himself finally relax as he could tell that Hannibal was trying to make the night as drama free as possible. Will laughed to himself as he thought about how angry he had gotten over Donald even though he had been with Hannibal the entire conference and in their everyday life.

I can't believe I got so upset… Will laughed out loud at something Hannibal said.

During an ensuing conversation over something Will didn't understand entirely, he scooted closer to Hannibal which ended with him practically leaning on his friend as if signaling to everyone else that they were in a romantic relationship.

Which I don't mind… Will said to himself without really thinking about the implication.

They stayed at the bar and restaurant for another hour or so before Will and Hannibal took a cab back to their hotel.

Back at the hotel…

Hannibal unlocked the door to the suite before opening it for Will. Will blushed again as he entered, feeling Hannibal close behind him as he walked straight to the bedroom. As soon as Will opened the door, he felt Hannibal hug him from behind. He grinned to himself as he turned his body around to face his friend, running his hands up along the sides of Hannibal's body before moving in to kiss him on the lips.

They embraced each other for several minutes before Will took a hold of Hannibal's hand to lead him to the bed. Will laid down in the bed before removing his shirt and pants, staring up at Hannibal with a suggestive smile as he waited for his friend to do the same.

Hannibal grinned down at Will, aware of what his friend wanted. He wanted the same, of course, but he was also thinking about why Will chose not to tell him about dinner with Alana. Hannibal had seen the message and thought Will would have said something about it if it weren't serious, especially after accusing him of jealousy.

And to be honest, Will was right again, but Hannibal chose not to say so out loud. He could feel himself losing control over his emotions and he knew he needed to keep himself in check; no one ever made him feel this way except for Will. It was finally becoming a drain on Hannibal as Will found every opportunity to accuse him of something.

Which is why Hannibal knew their arrangement was a bad idea from the very beginning, but he didn't want to lose Will.

"Are you getting in or what?" Will smirked before leaning up against the headboard, resting his hands behind his head.

Hannibal took a moment before nodding back. He removed his shirt and his pants before sliding into the bed. Will met him halfway before hugging him against his body. Will tilted his chin upward as he gazed at Hannibal before closing his eyes. He felt Hannibal touch his lips softly with his own as he rubbed his back.

Will moaned quietly as he felt every inch of Hannibal as best as he could. Yet as soon as his hand neared Hannibal's waist, he kept it there, deciding not to move it downward. He liked being with Hannibal like this; it felt more intimate than anything else they've done together.

"I love you, Will."

"…I love you too, Hannibal." Will said back automatically which then freaked him out instantly.

What? I can't believe I just said that… Will placed his hands on Hannibal's chest as he pushed himself away a bit in order to comprehend the moment.

"Uh…" Will said out loud to steady himself.

Hannibal's expression didn't change, and Will wasn't sure what to do. This whole entire trip had been an emotional rollercoaster and now they were confessing their love for each other.

But…Will thought about all the times Hannibal used to say that to him before their relationship turned physical.

Will did love Hannibal; however, he wasn't sure what type of love it was considering he couldn't be honest with himself.

But as Hannibal gazed back at him tenderly, now stroking the side of his face, Will didn't care about the semantics of their relationship. He wanted to be with Hannibal and it felt right. Well, right there in the moment it did and Will didn't want anything else.

Will told himself everything was okay and will be okay as he smiled at Hannibal before kissing him again, taking his time before sliding down Hannibal's body somewhat so he could rest his head on his chest.

"Did you have something you wanted to say?" Will heard Hannibal whisper.

Will shook his head. "No, I'm just settling." He wanted to say something, but he wasn't sure what he wanted to say and how to say it.

He could have told Hannibal how confused he felt; after all Hannibal was his closest friend. But he didn't want to ruin the night nor the rest of the trip. Also, Will couldn't be that honest. He hadn't been that honest since the first time he had sex with Hannibal.

Will sighed as he relaxed against Hannibal who had wrapped both arms around him, holding him tight. Will smiled to himself, becoming more excited about the remainder of the trip, feeling his best friend fit nicely against his body as if they were a perfect fit for each other. Will felt Hannibal kiss the top of his head as he closed his eyes before falling asleep.

A few days later…

"Do you have everything?"

Will looked up from his bag to see that Hannibal was standing halfway in the doorway to the bedroom. Will smiled back at his friend before resuming packing.

"I think so. Just need to check the bathroom."

Hannibal nodded before disappearing from the doorway. Will couldn't help smiling to himself as he thought about how they had been with each other the last few days of the conference.

Since the night of Hannibal's keynote speech, the two friends had been acting more like boyfriends than anything else. There was no more talk about Alana and Donald or anything else really besides cozying up with each other in private and in public. And to add to all of this bliss, they had sex every single night since.

Will hadn't responded to Alana's text either; he actually forgot about it. He was too focus on feeling a different connection with Hannibal than worrying about whether he had feelings for Alana. But of course, that would soon change as Will's phone vibrated next to his bag.

He glanced at his phone to see that Alana had sent him a text.

Alana: Hey! I hope you're doing okay. You and Hannibal must be super busy! Do you still want to have dinner? 😊

Will's breath hitched as he suddenly remembered that Alana had asked him out to dinner. He panicked as he looked around the room, hoping that Hannibal hadn't reentered the bedroom unannounced.

Fuck...Will cursed as he picked up his phone, his hands trembling.

But it's just dinner...Will reminded himself as he looked back at the bedroom door before looking back down at his phone.

It's just fucking dinner...Will groaned; he counted in his head to calm himself before typing out a reply to Alana.

Will: Hehe sorry! Yeah we've been super busy but dinner sounds great!

A second or so longer and Will's phone pinged back with a reply.

Alana: Great! 😊 Let me know which day works for you.

Will smiled at the message before he finished packing. He walked out of the bedroom to find Hannibal standing in the middle of the kitchen talking on the phone. Will smiled as he set his bag on a sofa in the living room area.

Hannibal finished his conversation before motioning for Will to follow him. "The car should be here soon."

Will nodded as he followed Hannibal out of the suite and down to the lobby. They stood around waiting until the car finally appeared. Will hopped into the back seat with Hannibal, scooting close to his friend so that he could rub his leg as they traveled to the airport.

About an hour later and Will and Hannibal were through security and sitting at their gate. The intercom would blast with announcements from time to time as the two friends chatted about potential plans for the upcoming week.

"Oh!" Will stopped as the intercom announced more seat changes, "I'm getting dinner with Alana." He offered casually, not really thinking about the consequence of such an off handed comment.

"I shouldn't forget that." Will laughed nervously to himself, remarking to himself that he hadn't said anything to Hannibal since confirming plans with Alana. He could feel himself becoming hyper aware of his surroundings, now regretting that he had even agreed to dinner with Alana.

Hannibal nodded slightly before smiling. “Sounds nice.”

Will barely nodded back; something about the tone of Hannibal’s voice was off putting.

“Uh, yeah…” Will responded, feeling a strange, sinking feeling.

But before either one could address the more than subtle change in atmosphere, the intercom announced that their plane was beginning to board. Both Will and Hannibal stayed silent, only talking to each other when necessary as they boarded the plane.

Part Fifty - Two

About a week later…

Abigail laughed as Winston dove underneath a blanket, poking his head out to look up at her slightly with one eye covered. Will was sitting on the couch supervising while Hannibal was in the kitchen cooking dinner.

“Winston,” Abigail scooped the puppy into her arms, giving him a tight, yet gentle hug, “you are *so* cute.”

Winston happily barked back before squiggling around in Abigail’s embrace causing both her and Will to laugh at how adorable he was being.

Since arriving home from their trip to Chicago, the relationship between Will and Hannibal felt a bit strained, to say the least. Will knew it had something to do with his upcoming dinner with Alana; Hannibal appeared like himself, however he would often feel distant and cold toward Will.

Will had convinced himself that dinner with Alana was nothing more than dinner with a friend, but the way that Hannibal had been acting toward him since coming home, suggested that there was more to it than either one was willing to confront.

“Abigail, make sure you wash up before dinner’s ready.” Will rose from the couch to join Hannibal in the kitchen who was in the process of pulling the main dinner dish out of the oven.

Will stopped short of entering the kitchen as he watched his best friend finish up dinner. Will stared; he observed Hannibal’s mannerisms as the latter moved about effortlessly through the kitchen. At one point Hannibal had his back facing Will who was still staring in his direction.

“Will?” Will snapped back to reality as he heard Hannibal call his name, but still had his back toward him.

“Do you mind grabbing the plates?” Hannibal turned to look behind himself at Will.

Will nodded somewhat, taking a moment before crossing the threshold into the kitchen. “Yeah sure…” Will barely let out as he maneuvered around Hannibal to avoid bumping into his friend to retrieve the plates.

Hannibal was next to Will at the counter and Will had stopped for a second to reach for the cabinets above the counter. He watched Hannibal out of the corner of his eye a bit longer before opening the cabinet doors to find some plates.

“So,” Hannibal smiled as Will handed him the plates, “what do you have planned with Alana?”

Will froze. “Uh, what?”

Hannibal laughed as he motioned for Will to move to the side so he could finish plating their dinner. “What do you have planned with Alana? Your dinner date is this Friday, isn’t it?”

Will gulped as he nodded slowly. *It’s just dinner, not a date.*

“It’s just dinner,” Will croaked before clearing his throat a few times, “not a date.”

Hannibal stopped what he was doing to look at Will before walking the plates to the table. “It’s on Friday, right?” He added with ease which disturbed Will.

“Uh,” Will nodded as he mindlessly opened a drawer to search for the cutlery, “yeah.” He added quietly as he joined Hannibal at the table.

Hannibal nodded as he sat down at the table. Abigail appeared from the hallway and sat down in her usual seat that was between Hannibal and Will. Will helped settle her into the chair before sitting down in his own.

“So, what do you have planned?” Hannibal placed a napkin on his lap before waiting for everyone else to settle before he began eating.

Will laughed nervously as he placed both hands on his knees. Something about Hannibal’s persistence was unsettling, and Will struggled to convince himself otherwise.

“We’re having dinner.” Will answered absentmindedly, hoping Hannibal would lay off.

Hannibal laughed. “I know that, Will. Where are you planning to have dinner?”

Will blushed as he finally focused his attention on Hannibal. Hannibal’s expression was soft yet stern. Will wasn’t sure how to respond, even if he kept telling himself that it was just an innocent dinner between friends.

“Uh, I think Alana is picking the place…” Will tried, remarking to himself that he hadn’t discussed with Alana where they planned to have dinner. Hannibal nodded with a smile as he took a bite of his food.

“Hannibal! This is so good!” Abigail exclaimed as she shoveled food into her mouth. Both Hannibal and Will chuckled at Abigail, but the laughter felt pained on Will’s side; he was having a difficult time trying to enjoy himself.

God, I’m so tired of these mental gymnastics…Will sighed loudly to himself as he propped himself up with one elbow. He pushed his food around on his plate with a fork, feeling himself losing his appetite.

Abigail chatted mostly during dinner as she caught Hannibal and Will up on her past week and when they were on their trip to Chicago. Hannibal responded to Abigail mostly, laughing once in a while as Will just sat rigid in his chair, not really eating and not really talking.

Will told himself he needed to take it easy; it really seemed like Hannibal didn't mind that he was having dinner with Alana. Will looked up from his plate, now watching Hannibal and Abigail interact with the other. Hannibal seemed less like himself, in a good way, whenever he was around Abigail. Something about Abigail's energy appeared to bring out a more human side of Hannibal that Will always appreciated seeing.

*I really need to relax…*Will finally smiled to himself, a genuine expression that he had been holding back during the last few days. After a minute or so, he finally found himself laughing as he listened to Hannibal and Abigail banter with one another.

"Chicago's great, Abigail." Will added at the end of Hannibal's comment about their trip, "we should take you there someday."

Abigail beamed. "I would like that!"

Both Hannibal and Will laughed as the three of them returned to their food. Some comfortable silent moments passed before Hannibal looked up from his plate directly at Will. Will noticed right away, acknowledging his friend with a smile.

"What?" Will teased before sipping from his water glass.

Hannibal chuckled. "Donald called the other day, but I've been too busy to call him back."

Will's eyes went wide as he tried not to outburst from Hannibal causally mentioning Donald.

Are you fucking kidding me right now? But then, as Will told himself to take it easy in front of Abigail, he reminded himself, once again, that Hannibal and Donald weren't seeing each other and that he occupied Hannibal's free time.

Will nodded slowly, initially making a face at the comment. But he also told himself that this might be Hannibal's way of being open with him. Because, as Will let go of the fork he had clenched upon hearing Donald's name, Hannibal was his closet friend and Will should be able to trust him.

But then again, as Will leaned back in his chair, he found himself losing patience with Hannibal's antics. If it really was a problem that he was having dinner with Alana, then Hannibal should say something.

Yet, as Hannibal continued eating and Abigail appeared oblivious to the tension, Will settled. He wanted to have dinner with Alana, and he was looking forward to it. So what if Donald was calling Hannibal. They were free to see other people. That was the point of the arrangement anyway.

*Besides, I'm just having dinner…*Will quickly reminded himself, or really lied. *I'm not going on a date with Alana and Hannibal's not sleeping with Donald, so there's absolutely no reason why none of this is a huge deal.*

"Oh yeah?" Will started, shifting in his seat to look at Hannibal out of the corner of his eye, "make sure you call him back then." He had meant for his tone to sound casual and teasing,

but it sounded deeply sarcastic instead.

Hannibal perked up as he took his time answering, chewing slowly before dabbing his mouth off with a napkin. Will shrugged as he rose from the table to refill his water glass.

“Maybe we’ll do Italian.” Will added as he turned around to propped himself against the sink counter. He sipped from his glass as he stared back at Hannibal who was looking back at him from the table.

“Dinner with Alana,” Will clarified with a smirk, “Italian sounds good.” Will wasn’t sure what the reasoning was behind his tone, but he could feel himself becoming strangely defensive.

Hannibal continued to stare back at him before nodding slowly. “That sounds excellent.”

Will paused before responding with a nod; he swirled the water around in the glass by revolving his glass with his wrist. He shrugged again before walking back to the table.

“Maybe you should get dinner with Donald.” Will responded before sitting down in his chair. He winced from the provocation, but Hannibal’s behavior was annoying him, especially after he had made it clear that he was only having dinner with Alana.

Hannibal sat back in his chair, seemingly amused by Will’s suggestion. “Maybe.” He let out before switching the conversation to some upcoming plans that involved Abigail.

Will decided to let it go; he needed to focus on his dinner with Alana anyway. Although he was looking forward to it, he felt nervous. However, Will tried to tell himself, as he watched Hannibal and Abigail chat with another again, that dinner with Alana would allow him not to dwell too much on the state of his relationship with Hannibal, which seemed to be in a tensed place once again.

He needs to chill…Will thought to himself as he sipped from his glass, but then turned his thoughts back to the end of the week.

He smiled to himself as he listened to Hannibal and Abigail, thinking about seeing Alana soon.

“So, what are the rest of your plans for this weekend?”

And just like that, the dinner date with Alana arrived and it was an understatement to say that Will wasn’t prepared for it. Alana had chosen a nice restaurant that wasn’t terribly expensive and not too far away from Will and Hannibal’s apartment.

“Um…” Will rubbed the back of his head as he laughed nervously. Usually (and as we all know already) he spent his free time with Hannibal or with Hannibal and Abigail, but for

some bizarre reason, Will told himself not to say that.

"…I think I might just take it easy…" Will blushed, "you know, still trying to relax from the Chicago trip."

Alana smiled widely which eased Will somewhat. "It was so great getting to watch Winston. He's so cute."

Will nodded as he shuffled in his seat. He could feel his hands moisten which prompted him to rub the palm of his hands against his pant leg in an odd way that caused Alana to notice.

"Will, are you all right?" She asked, genuinely concerned.

Will tried to prevent himself from rolling his eyes; he *was* nervous, but he was also trying to have an enjoyable dinner. This would be the first time in a long while he had spent time with someone else besides Hannibal.

"Yep." Will answered as he leaned forward to sip from his wine glass. He had to prevent himself from downing the whole pour, but he needed something to calm his nerves and distract from making a fool of himself.

"So," Will started, telling himself to take it easy, "uh…" he tried to think of something to say, but he was struggling.

Alana took notice again, but she didn't dwell on it. "How's Hannibal?"

The question caused Will to choke on his wine before he had a chance to swallow it. He kept choking to the point that he disturbed the people sitting next to them.

Alana sat still in her chair, making it obvious she wasn't sure what she should do without making the scene even worse. Will managed to get a control of his reflexes as he let out one last rough cough. He blushed as he looked at Alana, nodding to indicate that he was fine, before reaching for his water glass to clear his throat, but he ended up choking again as soon as he took a sip.

Alana's face turned red as she expressed her uneasiness with Will coughing so loudly. After another minute of Will trying to get a handle over himself, he finally settled in his chair.

"Sorry…" Will coughed once more, but then his body steadied, "…I think I swallowed down the wrong pipe." He attempted with a smile, but he coughed instead which ended up making him slobber a bit.

Alana nodded as she handed her napkin to Will; Will could tell that she was trying to diffuse the situation.

"Thank you…" Will answered as he accepted the napkin. He wiped his mouth as he looked away from Alana, clearly embarrassed.

"So," Alana started again after waiting a second for Will to collect himself, "how's Hannibal?"

Will had to prevent himself from rolling his eyes; why Alana kept asking about Hannibal was beginning to bother him beyond her usual persistence.

“He’s fine.” Will only responded as he reached for his wine glass but told himself to sip slowly to avoid choking again.

But as Will reached for the glass, the force of the movement of his hand tipped the glass over, sending the wine flying out of the glass, across the tiny table and onto Alana, effectively ruining the nice cream-colored dress she was wearing.

“Oh my god!” Will jumped up from the table to get to Alana who was now standing and trying to dab the wine off her dress, “I am so sorry!”

Alana nodded as Will fussed over her. He could tell from her body language and expression that she was embarrassed. Will tried to help her clean off her dress, but his wiping motions neared her chest and also made the stain worse. Alana shook her head as she gently held out a hand to stop Will from attacking her with the restaurant cloth napkins.

“It’s okay,” she looked around the restaurant, “I’ll be right back.” Will stepped to the side as he watched Alana speed walk to the restrooms.

He sighed to himself as he picked up the napkins, straightening up to sulk back to his chair. Some of the other dinner guests next to their table were whispering loudly from how over the top Will was acting during dinner.

Will groaned as he leaned forward. He shook his head as he placed his head into his hands. He knew he wouldn’t have a perfect time due to his nerves, but he didn’t think the dinner would be an absolute disaster.

Some minutes passed as Will wallowed, anxiously waiting for Alana to come back, but also telling himself not to flee from dinner before she came back.

*I can’t believe I fucking blew this…*Will sighed in his head as he glanced upward. He could see Alana making her way back to the table; her dress had a bright red stain on the front.

Will tried to look pleasant, but he grimaced instead. Alana sat down at the table; her expression was grim. Several seconds crawled by as Will tried to figure out how to salvage the night.

“Uh,” Will started, watching Alana look down and away from him, “is your food okay at least?” He tried to smile but the joke fell flat with Alana who only nodded back.

Will sat back in his chair. He shook his head, mad at himself. “…I can…walk you back home if you don’t want to finish dinner…” He let out slowly.

Alana took a moment before looking back up at Will. She didn’t look angry, just frustrated but that didn’t stop Will from feeling awful on the inside.

“No, it’s okay,” Alana picked up her fork to resume eating, “my mom usually knows how to get stains like this out…I’ll call her later…”

In any other circumstance, other people would probably be able to laugh off the awkwardness but due to his social anxiety, Will blushed instead, making it obvious that he was feeling too uncomfortable to continue dinner, but did so in order not to look even more ridiculous.

The rest of dinner passed by painfully and slowly as Alana attempted to laugh the moment off, but Will was gradually closing himself off from the conversation. They ordered dessert but ate quickly. Soon after, Will and Alana were outside the restaurant, both feeling too awkward on what to do next.

"I can walk you home, if you want…" Will offered sheepishly. He had his hands in his pockets, and he was looking away from Alana.

Alana smiled slightly but then shook her head. "It's okay." She reached out to hug Will.

Will instinctively moved toward the hug but then recoiled to avoid the stain on Alana's dress. Alana stood still with her arms out, now looking more embarrassed than ever.

"Uh, sorry…I was…" Will motioned at the stain but then clammed up.

Alana winced before looking away down the street. "Uh…it's okay. Thanks for the dinner. I'll call you, okay?"

Will nodded quickly as Alana spun around to walk down the sidewalk. He groaned as soon as he was sure she was out of earshot.

Fuck my life… Will dragged his feet in the direction of his apartment, all the while mentally kicking himself for ruining the dinner. He thought maybe he should send Alana a message apologizing for how horrible the night was but decided against it.

She's never talking to me again… It seemed like it took Will forever to get home as he replayed the dinner in his head, wincing at every awkward moment.

As soon as he arrived at the apartment, he looked up to see that some of the lights were on. Will sighed as he ascended the steps, walking through the entry way to find Hannibal in the kitchen. Will huffed as he entered the kitchen. Hannibal was standing near the counter, already in his pajamas, sipping tea and reading a book. Will slumped into a chair at the table and buried his face into his hands.

Fuck my life… Will repeated to himself.

Hannibal looked up from his book. "How was dinner?"

Will sighed heavily as he leaned back in his chair. "It was absolutely terrible…" He then groaned as he lurched forward to place his head into his hands again.

Hannibal smiled as he kept his eyes on his book. "I'm sure it was better than you think." Obviously unaware of *how* terrible the dinner really was.

Will looked up from his hands and watched Hannibal read. He let his eyes trail down his friend's body starting at his chest and ending at his crotch. A second later, Will rose quickly

from the chair and walked toward Hannibal. Without really thinking about it, he took the book Hannibal was reading out his hands and tossed it over on the counter.

Will leaned inward to whisper into Hannibal's ear. "Let's fuck." He pressed up against his friend's body, feeling his chest before wrapping both hands around Hannibal's waist.

Will wasn't sure what compelled him into trying to seduce Hannibal. Maybe it was because the dinner with Alana had been so horrible, even though Will had convinced himself that it was really only dinner. Maybe it was because Will had been distracting himself instead of ruminating on the fact that Donald was trying to get back in touch with Hannibal. But whatever the reason, Will didn't care; he wanted to feel his best friend and let out some of his frustrations.

Hannibal let Will's hands roam his body, but he only placed his cup of tea down on the counter as Will kissed him. As he felt Will kiss him on the lips, moaning the entire time, Hannibal rested on hand on Will's waist as he kissed him back, but he refrained for going further.

"Fuck, Hannibal." Will whispered as he kissed his friend on the lips before moving to his neck.

Hannibal kissed Will on the cheek as he rubbed his hand up the length of Will's backside. After a second or so of Will's moaning, Hannibal finally gave in. He placed his other hand on Will's face, rubbing gently before kissing him passionately.

They made out for some time; Will was now rubbing up against Hannibal's leg, moaning with every movement.

Will pulled away from Hannibal. He looked upward at him slightly, biting his bottom lip before moving inward for another kiss. Hannibal grabbed Will at the waist, pulling him closer to his body before squeezing him gently.

Will kissed Hannibal deeply before pulling away again. "Come on, let's go to bed." He grinned as he took a hold of Hannibal's hand before dragging him to the latter's bedroom.

Will threw open the door before shoving Hannibal inside with a laugh. Hannibal landed on the bed and Will pounced on him, straddling his waist. Will moaned as he rolled his hips forward, feeling Hannibal as much as he could between his legs. Will gasped as he leaned forward to kiss Hannibal on the lips before moving down his body.

Will kissed Hannibal's body slowly. He then sat up straight as he yanked his shirt off before pulling Hannibal's upper body to sit up. Will grinned as he aggressively removed Hannibal's clothes down to his boxers. He pushed Hannibal to lie back down on the bed, feeling his chest with both hands as he kissed down the length of his body until he stopped at Hannibal's crotch.

Will looked up at Hannibal who had his eyes halfway open. Will smiled again before massaging Hannibal's cock with one hand. He felt everywhere, taking his time as he kissed Hannibal's cock through the fabric.

Will breathed deeply as he took his time finally removing Hannibal's boxers. Hannibal's cock was already hard from Will rubbing his body against it. Will kissed Hannibal's skin slowly, rubbing the base of his cock before engulfing it with his mouth.

He let his tongue swirl around Hannibal, moaning with every lick. From time to time, Will would look up at Hannibal who now had a hand through Will's hair, tugging gently. Will moaned at the sight of Hannibal like this, letting his tongue wrap around Hannibal's cock with each exhalation.

Will reached downward to feel himself, sliding his hand slowly up and down his own cock as he sucked on Hannibal. Will humped the mattress as his head bobbed up and down with every motion. He groaned and moaned as the sensation felt too great; he could feel himself nearing the edge along with Hannibal.

"Fuck…" Will came up for air before going back down on Hannibal. He pushed his body further into the mattress, thinking back to the memory of Hannibal fucking him in their hotel shower back in Chicago.

Will moaned loudly as his body tensed. Suddenly, he felt Hannibal come into his mouth. Will took his time swallowing as he rubbed up against the mattress more vigorously. He then moved up the bed to rub his cock up against Hannibal who was now holding his body tight against his own.

"Fuck, Hannibal." Will breathed as he slid his cock up against Hannibal's body. The way Hannibal was rubbing his body and now his ass was driving him crazy. Will propped himself up to get at a better angle, moaning louder as he came onto Hannibal's chest.

Will let out a satisfied groan as he came, letting himself collapse onto Hannibal before sliding to lie next to him. Will let out a sigh as he turned to place a hand on Hannibal's chest. He hugged Hannibal's body with both legs as he settled, strangely relieved from his horrible night.

Hannibal turned his head to the side to kiss Will on the forehead. "I'll be right back." He whispered before shuffling out of the bed.

Will nodded as Hannibal let go of his body. He could feel the warmth from Hannibal's touch leaving as well, but the lingering sensation he felt remained, keeping the bed as cozy as possible.

Will smiled to himself as he squiggled around in the bed, bunching the blankets in his fist before sitting up. He yawned, thinking he might need to fall asleep soon. Will then stretched looking over the side of the bed to find his pants. He got out of the bed, picking up his pants to look for his phone but it was missing. Will figured it probably ended up underneath the bed, but he was too tired to find it. So, he got back into the bed to look at Hannibal's phone on the bedside table to see what time it was.

Will scooted across the bed as he reached out for the phone. The phone screen saver flickered on as soon as Will held it up, however instead of seeing the time, Will was greeted with a text sent to Hannibal about an hour ago.

Will could feel his world crashing in on itself as he read the message.

Donald: Hey, just seeing if you're free for dinner some time soon. Would love to catch up 😊

Will dropped the phone as he felt his body go numb. His thoughts rammed into each other as he felt his body start to sink in the bed from his emotions doing summersaults. Finally making a decision, Will swiped the message which then led to the passcode. Will thought quickly as he guessed at Hannibal's passcode, trying a few number combinations before unlocking the phone with the date of Hannibal's sister's birthday.

Will heard the bathroom door close as the screen flashed to Donald's text in the message app. Will, without taking another second to think through his decision, deleted Donald's text. He could also see that Donald and Hannibal had been texting each other since Chicago, but he could hear Hannibal walking back to the bedroom, so he didn't have enough time to read the messages.

Fuck. Are you fucking kidding me! Will dropped the phone again as he struggled to place it back on the beside table. He managed to lie back down in the bed as the bedroom door opened.

Hannibal walked into the bedroom. He walked toward the bed but stopped before getting in, looking at his phone on the bedside table before looking at Will who had a tensed, painful expression on his face that was also accompanied with a twisted smile.

"Are you all right?" Hannibal asked as he lifted the blanket to lie down in the bed.

Wil nodded enthusiastically. "Yep!" He let out, hoping Hannibal wouldn't press him.

Hannibal stared down at Will before turning to grab his phone. Will gasped quietly as he watched Hannibal set an alarm on his phone before placing it back on the table.

"I need to get up early." Hannibal explained as he turned to his body to face Will.

Will nodded as he turned away from Hannibal; he was trying to hide his cagey behavior as much as possible. He felt Hannibal hug him from behind, but he couldn't relish in the moment. All Will could think about was that Hannibal had been talking to Donald since coming back home from Chicago and possibly doing whatever else behind his back.

Part Fifty - Three

Chapter Notes

> Sorry I've been MIA with this story, which is probably an age-old tale at this point. But here you go!
> Thanks for reading and happy new year :)
> --ladyslice

A few days later…

"I mean, he's totally out of his element…"

Let's fuck…

"…but I guess I'll have to deal since he's my boss. But really, the man is *so* incompetent."

Frederick turned slightly, frowning as soon as he realized that Hannibal wasn't paying attention to him complain. He groaned as he forcibly nudged Hannibal in the side with a hand holding a cocktail.

"Hannibal? Are you even listening to me?"

Frederick had invited a few of the residents out that evening for happy hour drinks. Both Hannibal and Frederick were standing by themselves next to a table near the glass façade of the swanky restaurant Frederick had picked out. Other residents had been filtering in and out all evening, some approaching the famed frenemies from time to time, but Frederick had managed to corner Hannibal to complain about his boss for a good deal of the evening.

Hannibal nodded, controlling an impending eye roll before motioning with his wine glass. "You know, Frederick, you might want to try another hospital if you're having so much trouble." He sipped from his glass as his sardonic response inevitably bristled Frederick.

Hannibal barely reacted as Frederick huffed indignantly. Besides never really paying attention to Frederick in general, Hannibal had been dwelling on Will's behavior from the last week or so over the course of the evening.

That evening, Will was at home studying for an exam, but Hannibal had decided against extending his friend an invite for that night as a curtesy. On top of that, he found himself becoming increasingly annoyed with whatever was going on between Will and Alana; Will hadn't mentioned anything about Alana since their last dinner date, and the silence was surprisingly disturbing Hannibal.

Frederick huffed again as he became more visibly agitated from Hannibal not only ignoring him, but also giving him grief.

“Hannibal, you’re *such* a bitchy friend…” Frederick turned to the side as he sipped from his cocktail.

Hannibal posed thoughtfully before responding. “You and I are friends?”

Frederick gasped before turning bright red. Hannibal grinned to himself, sipping from his glass. He then ignored Frederick again as he surveyed the restaurant to find a suitable escape as Frederick attempted to get conversation and repartee out of him.

“…I really don’t know why I even give you the time of day, Hannibal…”

Hannibal heard Frederick’s voice off in the distance as he spotted Donald. Donald was standing with a group on the other side of the restaurant.

Hannibal smiled and waved to which Donald smiled and waved back to. It wasn’t as if Hannibal was interested in Donald; actually, he really hadn’t been that serious about him when they were dating. Donald was just a pleasant distraction from Will’s constant wavering over their relationship. Also, Hannibal was growing tired of Donald constantly contacting him; Hannibal needed a new distraction to bide his time while Will figured out his feelings.

“…like sometimes I feel like you *never* listen to me…” Frederick continued on as Hannibal watched Donald accuse himself from his group to walk over to Hannibal and Frederick.

“…like we used to be so close, and now you’re just into Will or whatever…”

Hannibal smiled at Donald as the latter approached him. “Hey, Hannibal.” Donald greeted. “Frederick.” He smiled at Frederick who only grinned back, making it obvious that he enjoyed reveling in Hannibal’s relationship woes.

“Donald.” Hannibal reached out to give Donald a hug who timidly accepted it. Frederick chuckled to himself as he watched the encounter, but Hannibal and Donald managed to ignore him.

“So,” Donald started, keeping his focus trained on Hannibal,” I never heard back from you about dinner…” He continued to smile to convey that he wasn’t upset, but the comment made Frederick choke on a sip of his cocktail.

Hannibal kept his eyes on Donald. “Dinner?”

The smile on Donald’s face faded. “Yeah, I sent you a message a few days ago? I never heard back.” He shrugged.

Hannibal nodded, taking a moment before responding. “Yes, of course. How’s this weekend?”

Donald appeared relieved as he nodded back. “Yes, that sounds great.”

“So,” Frederick wedged himself in between Hannibal and Donald, “Donald, how’s it going, by the way?” He was grinning to signal how it still felt incredibly awkward the way Hannibal and Donald’s relationship ended.

The pleasant expression on Donald’s face faded once more as he visibly mustered up the courage to speak to Frederick. Hannibal ignored their conversation as he resumed surveying the restaurant, and suddenly, something caught his attention.

At the opposite entrance to the restaurant, Alana appeared. She was in a group, laughing at something one of her friends was loudly joking about. Hannibal watched her walk into the restaurant before excusing himself from Donald and Frederick.

Alana turned in Hannibal’s direction and immediately stopped talking, blushing as she spotted Hannibal walking in her direction.

Hannibal smiled as he approached the group, waving at Alana before reaching out his free hand to greet her. Alana whispered something to one of her friends before reaching out a hand toward Hannibal.

“Hi, Hannibal!” Alana called, perhaps with a little too much excitement as Hannibal shook her hand firmly.

“How are you?”

Hannibal nodded as he held onto Alana’s hand a little longer than he really needed to, lingering his gaze which made Alana turn even more red.

“I am well. And how are you?” Hannibal smiled, thinking to himself whether Will had spoken with Alana that day, but knowing full well that that was definitely an annoying possibility considering that his friend spent a good deal of his free time with her.

Alana giggled as she let go of Hannibal’s hand. “I’m all right! It’s really great seeing you here.”

Hannibal nodded again before sipping from his glass. Alana had stepped forward away from the group to stand closer to Hannibal. Hannibal had noticed this before about Alana; her mannerisms around him suggested her anxiety in ensuring she always left a good impression with him.

“For some reason,” Hannibal started, “I thought you would be over at our place studying with Will.”

Alana appeared crestfallen, but she recovered quickly. “No…” she laughed nervously, “I just emailed him some notes.”

Hannibal chuckled as he eyed Alana, and almost in such a way that made Alana giggle uncontrollably again.

“Hannibal,” Alana took another step forward, “I was so impressed with that speech you gave at the conference…it was so engaging.”

Hannibal nodded as Alana praised his work, thinking to himself how he should navigate taking advantage of the situation.

“Yes, I’m glad you got to see it.” Hannibal answered as he indicated a comforting demeanor with his body language.

Alana giggled again, now very close to Hannibal. Hannibal stayed in place as he continue to observe her mannerisms.

“I don’t know what your schedule is like…,” Hannibal started out quietly, “…but would you like to have lunch with me sometime in the near future?”

The gesture made Alana’s eyes light up with gleeful surprise. She turned red again as she nodded emphatically.

“That would be amazing!” She nearly squealed, “I mean, yes, of course…uh, can I text you when I’m free. I just need to check my work calendar…” She made sure to tone down her excitement with Hannibal taking the time to see her, even for lunch.

Hannibal’s expression transformed into a contained smile. “Anytime. I’m looking forward to it.”

Will inhaled and exhaled deeply as he stopped to catch his breath. He had jogged all the way from his apartment to the diner he was supposed to meet Alana at for an early dinner. And of course, he was several minutes late.

Will took a moment to make sure he didn’t look or sound like a complete disaster before entering the diner. As he walked inside, he found Alana sitting in a booth, reading a book while taking notes. At the same time, Alana looked up from her work to see Will. She smiled and waved at Will as he approached the booth.

She always looks so nice… Will thought to himself.

“Hey, Will.” Alana smiled, placing the book and the notebook in her bag before rising to give Will a hug. Will hugged her back, lingering somewhat before letting go to sit down in the booth across from Alana.

“How are you doing?” Alana smiled at Will in such a way that he always appreciated.

“I’m okay.” Will answered with a sigh as he thumbed through the menu.

Alana nodded as she leaned forward. “How do you think you did on the exam?”

Will glanced upward from the menu. “It was fine. Or well, I guess I did okay. Thanks for the tips, by the way.” He grinned to himself; Alana had given him some useful pointers on

managing stress while taking a test and, surprisingly, her advice had helped this time.

“I’m glad they were helpful.” Alana smiled back at Will before looking at the menu.

Will let out a nervous laugh as he watched Alana intently. He still wasn’t sure where they were at with their relationship or friendship. Alana had been texting him less lately and he hadn’t really noticed until yesterday when it took her all day to respond to a seemingly innocuous message.

Will wasn’t sure if he should mention it either; he was always afraid to say or do something awkward around her that would wreck any chance he had with her after screwing up royally during their last dinner. And on top of that, Hannibal had been acting more and more distant which was already freaking Will out. Hannibal hadn’t said anything about seeing Donald, and Will wasn’t sure how long he could take the feeling of seeing his closest friends pull away from him.

“I saw Hannibal the other day…” Alana started after a waitress took their food orders.

Will scrunched up his face before relaxing somewhat. “Uh, really?”

Alana nodded. “He was at a happy hour thing one of the residents organized. It was the same evening you were studying for the exam.”

Will nodded back slowly, but he could feel himself on the verge of losing it. *Why wouldn’t Hannibal tell me he was hanging out with Alana?*

“He didn’t mention anything about a happy hour…” Will sounded despondent. He remembered Hannibal going out that evening but had assumed he was just getting drinks with Frederick.

“I wasn’t aware…” Will cleared his throat as he fiddled with a fork on the table, “that, uh Hannibal was out with a bunch of people…”

Alana frowned. “Maybe he didn’t want to disturb you studying for the exam.”

Will nodded again, but he found it difficult to accept the thought. Hannibal had a habit of keeping things from him, sure, but his behavior over the last week was next level at this point in their relationship. Quizzing Will about Alana and then not mentioning he had seen her; Will knew there had to be an ulterior motive as to why Hannibal didn’t ask him to happy hour besides the exam.

“Maybe…” Will muttered.

“Wanna see a movie and get dinner this Friday?” Alana asked without missing a beat.

Will nodded, but something about Alana’s dinner invite felt different this time. Will couldn’t quite place what was so different about Alana’s tone, but she appeared detached.

“Sure…” He responded, “is there anything in particular you wanted to see…or eat for dinner I guess…” Sounding already defeated with the situation.

Alana smiled. “I don’t have anything really in mind. Whatever works for you.”

Will took a moment before nodding back again. They chatted for about another hour, but the conservation felt stilted. It felt so different from their usual ease with another that Will feared he had offended his friend somehow.

I really hope Hannibal didn’t say anything to her… Will internally groaned.

What Hannibal would say to Alana was beyond him; it wasn’t like Hannibal was bragging that he and Will were sleeping together. However, Will had a feeling that something had happened between Hannibal and Alana at this happy hour and it was putting a damper on his relationship with Alana.

About an hour later…

Will sighed as he opened the door to the apartment. He glanced around the living room thinking that Hannibal might be in the kitchen. He dropped his bag by the front door, dragging his body to the kitchen, expecting to hear his friend tinkering around, but there was no sign of Hannibal.

Hm… Will thought, “Hannibal?” He called before stepping back out into the hallway. “Hannibal?”

Will called again, but he was met with silence. He spun around to reenter the kitchen. As he approached the table, Will saw a folded note with his name written on it. Will frowned as he reached for the note before unfolding it. The note was from Hannibal, saying that he wouldn’t be home until late that night.

Will groaned; Hannibal had been spending more time at the hospital lately, and to the point that Will hadn’t seen Hannibal in a couple days.

Will crumpled up the note before tossing it in the garbage. He groaned again before spinning around to the leave the kitchen, marching to his bedroom. He was so annoyed that Hannibal was giving him the cold shoulder, yet he had no idea why.

Will stopped in the middle of the doorway before entering his room, thinking quickly to himself before marching to Hannibal’s bedroom. Will opened the door slowly, looking down the hallway in the direction of the front door as if Hannibal would appear suddenly.

When his friend did not predictably appear, Will pushed Hannibal’s bedroom door open wider. He stood in the doorway, staring down at his friend's bed. Even on his busiest days, Hannibal managed to leave his room meticulously spotless, appearing as if no one had ever used the room prior.

Will stood still before walking closer to the bed. He hesitated before sitting down on the edge, thinking about both Hannibal and Alana.

Fuck… Will groaned as he laid down on top of Hannibal's bed. *I hope they're not working together…*

He shuffled around in the bed until he was directly in the middle, now staring up at the ceiling. Will sighed heavily as he turned his head to look at the side of the bed Hannibal usually slept on when they slept together. Will turned onto his side, reaching out for Hannibal's pillow, pulling it close to his body. Will took in Hannibal's lingering scent as he hugged the pillow against himself, feeling it as if he were feeling Hannibal.

After some time, Will sat up in the bed. He glanced around the room, now smiling to himself. He threw his clothes off his body, totally naked before lying back down in the bed. He slipped underneath the covers, thinking about surprising Hannibal when he returned home later that night.

Will moaned as he thought about Hannibal against his body, rubbing himself against Hannibal's pillow.

The next morning…

A loud snore escaped from Will, waking him up immediately. He opened his eyes, blinking a few times before he realized that he was still alone in Hannibal's bed.

What time is it…? Will groaned as he slowly turned over onto his side to peer at the clock on Hannibal's beside table. It was eight in the morning.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" Will let out loud as he slammed his body back down into the bed.

I can't fucking believe this… Will groaned as he raised both arms before punching the bed with both fists. He sat up in the bed, too angry to really think, before launching himself out of the bed. He found his discarded clothes on the floor from the night before, grumbling to himself as he tried to dress, but was too furious with Hannibal for spending all night at the hospital.

I cannot fucking believe him. As soon as Will swung open the bedroom door, he heard someone moving around in the kitchen.

You have to be fucking kidding me… Will repeated again in his head as he marched into the kitchen to find Hannibal in the process of making breakfast.

"Good morning, Will." Hannibal offered with a smile as he placed a skillet on top of the stove.

Will shook his head. He stayed in the archway to the kitchen. “What happened to you coming home last night? I waited up for you all night, Hannibal.” He tried to keep his anger in check but his tone at the end betrayed his true feelings and hurt.

Hannibal stopped what he was doing to turn some more to face Will more directly. He rested his hands on his hips.

“I did come home last night but I slept on the couch because you were in my bed.” He coolly responded.

Will scrunched up his. “What?” He shook his head, furious with Hannibal and in disbelief that his friend looked well rested despite sleeping on the couch.

“You could have woken me up.”

But before hearing a response from Hannibal, Will threw up his hands, marching out of the kitchen. He went straight to the bathroom, slamming the door close with frustration. He sighed as he struggled to take a deep breath, telling himself that blowing up on Hannibal wouldn’t be the most appropriate thing to do given the past.

But he’s pissing me the fuck off! Will screamed in his head.

He paced in front of the mirror, trying to reason internally with why Hannibal was distancing himself again. Well, until Will remembered what Alana had told him about that stupid happy hour.

Will stopped to stare at himself in the mirror. *Fuck…*There was no possible way that the two people he trusted the most were keeping something from him.

“Will?” Will turned his head slightly after he heard Hannibal’s voice on the other side of the bathroom door.

“I’m fine, Hannibal.” Will called back, although he wasn’t.

Will sighed as he faced the sink, expecting to hear Hannibal respond, but there was silence once again. He turned the water on, letting it run for a bit before splashing some onto his face. He needed to regroup in order to pay attention in his least favorite class that day and he didn’t have the time for Hannibal’s bullshit.

Will paused, staring at himself in the mirror again, before turning around to open the bathroom door. The hallway was empty. He looked down the hallway in the direction of the kitchen before walking to his room. He could hear and smell Hannibal making breakfast.

Will rolled his eyes as he walked into his bedroom, trying to focus on his first class rather than his relationship drama with his best friend.

That Friday…

Will was sitting next to Alana in the middle of a movie theatre. They were watching a comedy, something they both had wanted to see for some time now, but Will found it difficult to laugh. He was ruminating over Hannibal's bizarre behavior while checking his phone from time to time, hoping the movie would end soon.

Alana was laughing along with the rest of the audience. Once in a while, she would glance in Will's direction and Will would pretend to be having a great time although he was annoyed with both Alana and Hannibal. With Hannibal, it was clear why Will was annoyed, but with Alana, Will wasn't entirely sure why, much like he had been with the state of their relationship.

Something about Alana being around Hannibal outside of the hospital without him bothered Will and he was having trouble trying to reconcile his feelings about it.

After the movie finally ended after another hour of Will checking his phone and not paying attention while suffering through everyone else enjoying themselves, he and Alana went to dinner at a restaurant not too far away from the theatre.

Alana talked about the movie the entire time after they placed their orders while Will could barely be bothered to really add anything to the conversation.

"Will." Will looked up from his phone at Alana as their food arrived. Something about her expression made him instantly uncomfortable.

"You would, uh, know…" Alana laughed awkwardly, "…if, uh, Hannibal was seeing anyone, right?" Her tone signaled that she knew what she was asking about sounded juvenile but wasn't sure how to express it without being direct.

However, Will failed to appreciate his friend's justified apprehension. In fact, part of him was annoyed beyond belief, but he couldn't make a scene in front of Alana, especially considering she was someone who always managed to tolerate his personal foibles.

What the actual fuck…? Will thought to himself instead as he tried to come up with a calmed, measured response.

It bothered him whenever Alana asked him about Hannibal, but it never occurred to him, or he wasn't willing to admit, that Alana might be interested in Hannibal.

As the seconds passed with Alana waiting patiently, albeit nervously, for him to answer, Will thought maybe he should lie. Or maybe, he should tell the truth. Or maybe, he should just finally confess to himself and to everyone else that he was actually in love with his best friend and that they were essentially dating despite Will's unwillingness to fully commit (and of course this part was lost on our dear Will).

"Uh…" Will started, stumbling, "uh, well…no…not at the moment…"

Will felt paralyzed, much like the first time he witnessed Alana fawning over Hannibal in front of him. He had figured that Alana was mesmerized by Hannibal much like others, but never romantically interested. Actually, Will thought that Alana might have been interested in him. Her behavior, well until recently, suggested so.

Alana smiled, looking relieved. “Oh, that’s great! He had asked me if we could get lunch together but I’ve been too afraid to reach out again. Should I just wait until he says something? I don’t want to bother him…”

Will’s eyes widened as he drowned out Alana’s voice. *What the actual fuck?* He thought again as Alana mused on and on about what to do about Hannibal and lunch.

“…I bet he’s just waiting for me to say something,” Alana nodded with a satisfied sigh, “I’ll text him later. Thanks, Will!”

Will stared back at Alana who appeared delighted. The rest of the dinner was just as miserable as his week as Will smoldered over Hannibal getting close to Alana.

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